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In Search of Sheba

BARBARA TOY

This is the fifth of Barbara Toy's journeys made alone with no schedule, no budget and no sponsor. All her journeys previously have been in search of new places and new peoples, but this time she went back three thousand years, looking for traces of one of the most elusive people in history—the Queen of Sheba.

Her search took her across the Sahara, through the Congo and Uganda, down the Nile to Khartoum, and finally to Ethiopia by the little-known Eritrean border, and at the end she found herself mainly with queries. Did the Queen of Sheba come from Ethiopia, and is the Emperor of that magnificent and proud country descended from her as he maintains? Whether or not this is so, the spirit of Sheba still lives in the women of modern Ethiopia who display the same independence and drive as that enigmatic woman.

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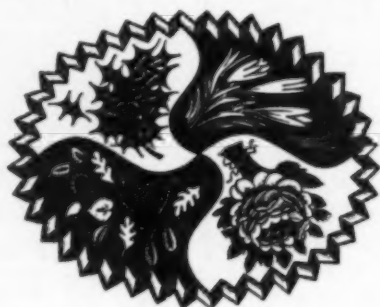
Born in 1874, Lina Waterfield looks back on a romantic and unusual life. Brought up at Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire, she was educated in a Paris convent and made her home in two houses in Italy, one near Florence and the other in the Carrara Mountains. She was painted by Watts, Furze and Sargent and she knew many artists, poets and writers.

The author settled down with her painter husband to an idyllic life at the castle of Aulla beside the Apennines. As her interest in politics was as strong as her interest in Italian art, she watched the rise of Fascism with apprehension. In 1919 she became *Observer* correspondent in Italy and her intimate knowledge of Italian politics and her close study of Mussolini, with whom she had many revealing interviews, contribute important chapters to the history of Fascism up to her escape on the day Italy entered the second world war.

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THE CORNHILL



No. 1029

Autumn 1961

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

At present THE CORNHILL appears quarterly and will publish occasional Supplements containing work of up to 35,000 words in length.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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ELSPETH DAVIE studied at Edinburgh University and the College of Art and taught painting. She has written a number of short stories, one of which was published in *The Observer Prize Stories* 1952. She is working on a novel.

FRANCIS KING is a lecturer for the British Council in Tokyo, has published poetry in a number of magazines and a volume of poems, *Rod of Incantation*. Amongst his novels are *The Dividing Stream* (Somerset Maugham Award 1952), *The Widow*, *The Man on the Rock*, *The Custom House* and a volume of short stories, *So Hurt and Humiliated* (Longman).

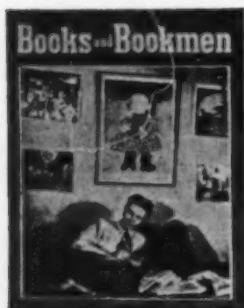
FRANCIS LEARY is an American writer who has spent considerable time in France near the sources for his studies of the fifteenth century. Amongst his books are *This Dark Monarchy* (Evans) and *The Golden Longing* (John Murray). *The Toy Railway* deals with the background and characters which appear in a modern novel, *The Last Yale Game*, forthcoming.

RICHARD LUCAS comes from a writing family, worked on a magazine and is now writing for television. He is at present working on short stories and his first novel.

SIR IAN CRITCHETT, who was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, has served in the R.A.F.V.R. and, since 1948, in the Foreign Service.

MAY SARTON, writer, poet, lecturer, is of Belgian extraction but her family are now American. Amongst her books are: *The Bridge of Years*, *Shadow of a Man* (Cresset Press), *A Shower of Summer Days* (Hutchinson), *Faithful are the Wounds*, *The Birth of a Grandfather* and *The Small Room* (Gollancz).

ELIZABETH JOHNSON lives in New York, is attached to New York University and writes book reviews for *The New York Times*. She has published stories and poems.



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COLLINS

A Grotto on the Vignemale

BY ROBIN FEDDEN

[Robin Fedden, setting out in search of *Los Encantados*, the Enchanted Mountains, describes his first entry into that remote sector of the Spanish Pyrenees west of the Noguera Ribagorzana, and recalls the dedicated passion of an illustrious and eccentric predecessor.]

THE air that morning as we walked up the valley of Artiga de Lin was fresh and cool. In its newness it was suited to a setting-out, to the beginning of adventure. Above the meadows, we climbed through beechwoods. There was no sound, except a tinkle as the mule's hoof struck a stone and at intervals a cry from the muleteer urging his beast. Straying to pick wild strawberries, we stumbled into a bear trap and were delighted that such hazards existed. When the woods grew brighter and insects glistened in flutes of slanting light, we realised that the sun had caught us. The day was moving on. But in this beechwood, time was palpable, innocent and open. It is always so, when one is committed to anything worth doing. Only when the day, the week, the month, pass with no sense of reality, and their passage is barely registered in greying hairs, the friend estranged, the altered habit, does time presage death. It then moves like the cunning stalker in Grandmother's Steps. Eyes are covered; no one is near; yet, as one turns, the tap falls on one's shoulder. Time in activity, time valuable, is half disarmed. Never is one more free, and aware, of time than in the mountains. There it never smoulders to the grey ash which marks the progress of a life-sentence. Time, the enemy-friend, is always present to the mountaineer. He works with it and against it. Each hour of daylight is valuable, and so is valued. Committed to the ridge or rock-face, even to the crossing of a simple Pyrenean pass such as was ours, he is interlocked with time. Success or failure depend upon it. His

A Grotto on the Vignemale

day moves closely with the sun. Time in the mountains is real and so is robbed of its penumbral horror. No one has aged climbing without the recognition that the change was fair and that time has taken no more than was paid for.

Towards the tree-line the forest thinned. Fingers of light that seemed like transparent birches gave place to white obelisks, then to pools of sun, then to awkward gaps among the trees. Walking through dense woods one gains height without noticing, and the elation of being detached and above the world comes suddenly. Stepping from the last circle of shade, we found that our horizon had miraculously grown. We were on high pastures where immense yellow mullens made a new and miniature forest; wheatears and black redstarts watched us from outcrops of stone; we were on terms with a dozen lesser peaks. To the south rose the Poumera and the profile, so deceptively noble, of the Fourcade that we were later to climb. Today our route swung west to the Col de l'Inferno. Treading on smooth turf, we mounted by open pastures, the voluptuous slopes reposing in the clear air like vast female shapes under coverlets of green.

Crowning the last of these recumbent forms was the little Pic de la Escalette. As we scrambled up the rocks the central Pyrenees unfolded. In one direction the velvet hills flowed down to France. Already the light was moulding the rounded shoulders and arms, and in the coombes between long green thighs shadows were gathering. Eastward, below our beechwoods, the curving trough of the Val d'Aran (meadows hedged with stunted trees, lean stone-roofed hamlets perched on hillsides) climbed to sculptural slopes and the valley's end at the Bonaigüe Pass. Beyond the pass, half the Pyrenees, peak on peak, stretched to the Mediterranean. Southward rose our immediate goal, the massif of the Aneto, draped with glaciers and glittering in the sun. Directly west, and so seen that the peaks backed one against another giving no sense of perspective, stretched the Atlantic half of the watershed, a jumble of shale, rock and snow.

On our small peak we could appreciate the differing nature of the two faces of the Pyrenees. From the north in a few hours we had breasted the summit ridge of the chain, but southward, behind the Pic d'Aneto, we could see ridge on ridge fading into blue distance.

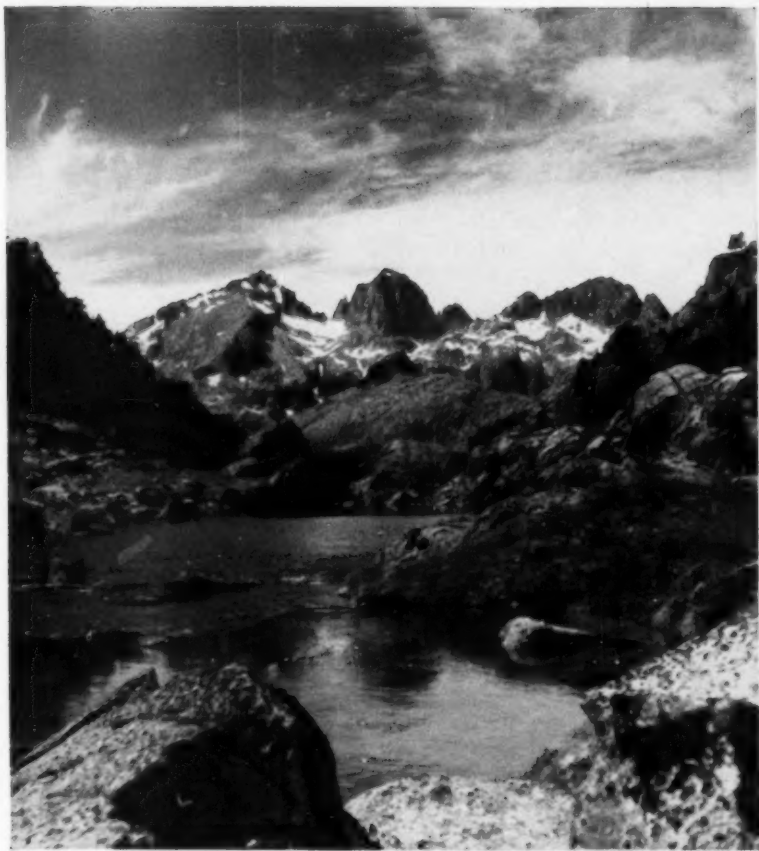


Photo : Basil Goodfellow

THE REGION WAS POKED WITH SMALL LAKES, LENDING PERMANENT SURPRISE
AND FRESHNESS TO THE LANDSCAPE



By courtesy of The Alpine Journal

COUNT HENRY RUSSELL RECLINING

On the French side, the approach to the watershed is short and the geography simple. The range stands up boldly. Sometimes as little as twenty miles in a straight line separate the plain beyond the foothills and the summits at 11,000 feet. Ridges and buttresses jolting to these summits enclose short valleys with a characteristic 'stepped' formation. Stretches of upland pasture, almost level, that offer easy walking, are separated by brief gorges where the water foams between walls of rock. Here in tedious zig-zag the mule tracks climb the mountain flanks. By contrast, on the Spanish side it is often sixty miles from the plain to the watershed. Subsidiary ranges run parallel to the main chain, and the waters find their way to the Ebro by circuitous routes. Curiously enough it is also south of the watershed, as we could note from our vantage point, that the highest peaks, for obscure geological reasons, are found. This south is a deep and tangled area, little visited. Its isolation is increased by the surprising elevation of the passes which are higher than those in the Alps. When we first stood on the Pic de la Escalette, there was no road across the range between the Bonaigüe Pass to the east and the Pourtalet westward, a distance of seventy-five miles.

The vegetation on the two sides of the Pyrenees was as different as their formation. The beechwoods through which we had climbed were characteristic of the northern slopes, where close forests mantle the mountain-sides. In the country where we were bound, the 2,000 square miles between the Posets and the Encantados, between the streams of the Ara and the Noguera Pallaresa, trees were few and gnarled, and the climate drier; yet the region was pocked with small lakes, lending permanent surprise and freshness to the landscape, and the lower slopes were fantastically flowered.

An unlikely green ridge, thatched with turf, its sides steep as a gabled roof, led from our belvedere to the Col de l'Inferno. There was nothing forbidding about the pass on a June day, though in retrospect we seem to have carried our mule across the brief rocky passage. So we came to the Port de la Picarde, saw our first lammergeier with wing-span like an aeroplane, and found, between the massif of the Aneto and the main chain where we stood, the uppermost reach of the Val d'Esera cradled at our feet. Lying so, between glacier and barren rock, the gentleness of this remote valley, its

A Grotto on the Vignemale

winding stream, its air of seclusion, linked it with the idyllic pastures that shelter in the mind. It came as a gift, generously and unexpectedly. The sun slanting across the valley lent a liquid softness to the depths below us. We might have been looking into an unruffled lake, 2,000 feet of clear water. A mile distant, where the valley dropped away, the Esera made an elbow turn to the south, thus giving the valley-head its *secrecy*. As so rarely happens in nature, we looked on a work of art. The very perfection was strange; such things do not normally come about. We felt for the first time that unreality, that sense of a landscape under spell, which travellers have repeatedly noted in these Pyrenees.

An alpine valley would have been groomed and put to use, beautiful in a different way: pastures subdivided into toy-like rectangles and rhomboids, tousled mops of hay drying on ash poles, ruminating cattle, brown chalets. Here there seemed no sign of life or husbandry, until our muleteer indicated, among the boulders on the opposing mountain-side, the hut to which Don Miguel had secured the key, and drew our attention to a curious brown blotch on the pastures below. "Mares," he said.

We descended knee-deep through feathery grasses. They parted easily and we walked, scattering myriads of grass seeds, as through green foam. There were Turk's head lilies and patches of iris, islands of brilliant blue set capriciously in the green sea. Quail, unusual at such altitude, flushed at our feet but their straight brusque flight, as always, lacked determination and they collapsed into the grass fifty yards away. We were silent. One talks in a hut or by a fire in the open, but not much when walking or climbing: one is either too preoccupied, or too happy. Going down to the Val d'Esera we were happy.

Approaching the valley bottom we remarked that the hundreds of horses pasturing there did not stray. The brown blotch they made extended no more than a quarter-mile, as though they were confined within this area by a mysterious social tie. They varied from cream to black and these colours were seen against sward, the curve of each back outlined against the green. They were not mere quadrupeds, for they had the presence of the animals that obsessed Piero di Cosimo. Though sharing with the valley the permanence of art—and here again

Robin Fedden

was strangeness—they seemed to wheel in continual movement about an invisible centre. This was the more surprising for when one looked closely, narrowing vision to ten square yards, one detected only a shaken mane, a lifted hoof, an occasional arbitrary turn. Our route brought us to the fringes of the herd and, as we threaded our way among them, I was glad that they disregarded us. They had grown larger, as landowners do on their own estates, and we seemed to reach only their withers. They were the aborigines of the valley, the proper owners, and intruding on their gathering we were lucky not to be challenged in an unknown language. We trod delicately among the cropping beasts, who so generously ignored us. They had, we found, a herdsman; that he, in his rags and with domed mud-hovel, could perform some useful office for these noble creatures seemed improbable. Here at the headwaters of the Esera to be human was a disadvantage. Less confident than his herd, the man jumped to his feet and held a great staff like a barrier towards us. We spoke from a distance and he was still watching uncertainly (though of the herd not a head was lifted) as we moved from the soft nap of the valley to the boulder-strewn slopes of the Aneto. In half an hour we had reached the hut.

There is pleasure in an untenanted hut; in disposing one's gear methodically; in finding employment for hook, table, and bench, perhaps long unused; in starting a fire and creating warmth. The process offers the satisfaction of moving into a new house, but is accomplished in an hour. It is a satisfaction rarely to be enjoyed in the Spanish Pyrenees. We little realised that we slept that night in comfort such as existed nowhere else in Aragon at 7,000 feet. In an area which knew little of climbing history, of guides, guide-books, or huts, the Aneto and the Rencluse Hut were exceptional. As the highest point of the Pyrenees, the Aneto had been attempted in the eighteenth century. It had been climbed in 1842 and, though lying well in Spanish territory, had for decades been a popular ascent. The logical approach was from Luchon; the frontier was crossed, and the Esera gained, by a dramatic notch in the watershed, the Port de Benasque, a passage between rock walls at some 8,000 feet. Before the first hut was built, people made their bivouac and lit their fires in a cave-like shelter, 'la Rencluse.' Later a cabin was

A Grotto on the Vignemale

built nearby, where the amiable and rugged Madame Sayo, whose reputation has long outlived her, ministered to mountaineers. Time passed. With the Civil War the frontier was closed and those who found their way into the region did not come to climb. When the authorities regained control of the area, after 1945, the Rencluse was in ashes. It had been rebuilt by José Abadias, whom we were later to meet, patriarch and innkeeper at Benasque, six hours down the Esera valley. Thus we slept under a roof.

We woke to storm and wind, but even these can be acceptable in a quiet hut, if days are not too precious. There is a frayed rope-end to re-bind and crumpled flowers to identify. Beside the stove we pored over maps; we talked of other mountains and augured hopefully from other storms on other occasions; we dozed over our books; we slept. Intermittently we questioned the barometer and from the window looked at the struggle above, watched the battle sway as the peaks threw off the assaulting cloud or went down fighting, blotted out. When it cleared towards evening, our spirits lifted like the vapour. We stepped out buoyantly to find the air deliciously clear, rinsed by the departed rain and wind. Jumping like children from boulder to boulder, we raced along the mountain-side. Above us the peaks, hidden all day, had returned firm and confident to their stations. The valley glistened, no longer obscured by veils of driving rain. The mares in their formal circle were grazing unconcerned as ever, and the herdsman was fishing on the bank of the stream. Beside him an enormous white Pyrenean sheep-dog sat on its haunches.

That evening we would not have been elsewhere at any price. Though the weather was perhaps a little too warm, the stars were out. Tomorrow we should climb the Aneto. In itself the climb was nothing, *un nada* as someone had airily remarked in the café at Lés. But here in Aragon there were no reassuring tracks, no guide-books or maps as the modern climber knows them. Imagination was free to play on our 11,000-foot mountain. We were back in the nineteenth century and this constituted the very point of our expedition. Having set the alarm clock for three-thirty, we should have crawled early into our sleeping bags, but already the morning was with us in anticipation, making sleep difficult. We poured

more wine and sat talking at the trestle table, while the stove purred. Naturally we talked of the Aneto, the inelegant but convincing massif that couched above us in the dark. Draped with glaciers it stretched three miles from the Pic d'Alba to the Pic des Tempêtes, and its backbone dropped nowhere below 10,000 feet. The crux of the climb was the Pont de Mahomet, the airy granite ridge that led to the summit. Presumably the name was derived from the rope known to Muslim theology which stretches over hell and which the righteous alone can cross to attain Paradise. The name is no stranger than that of the adjoining Maldetta, the Accursed Mountain. 'Accursed' they say because Christ wandering in this wilderness, and meeting with fierce herdsmen and fiercer dogs, turned the latter to stone. Christ, Mahomet, such are the names that shepherds here have long invoked.

To talk of the Aneto was also to talk of the two friends to whom, in a sense, the massif and much of the Pyrenees rightfully belong. We envisaged them, clad in Norfolk jackets, perhaps wearing the new-fangled balaclava helmets, on the skyline or straddling the Pont de Mahomet. By the wheezing stove in the Rencluse it was a duty to remember them, for no mountain chain has been so lovingly pioneered as were the central Pyrenees by Packe and Russell. They discovered most of the region nearly a century ago. Having no maps, with no guide but observation and a compass, year after year they navigated like sailors among the unknown reefs and glaciers. Their first ascents are numberless; it was *their* country. Perhaps for this reason, their expeditions were not assaults. They did not conquer peaks to possess and leave them, as do mountain philanderers. Their climbs were not a battle and a parting: they cherished their mountains and returned. Packe climbed the Aneto six times; Russell, who made at least five ascents, once spent a night on the summit and at dawn noted the snow blood-red where the first sun struck, but deep blue in the shadows.

Though friends, they were different, representing two approaches to the mountains on which mountaineering has much depended, the scientific and the romantic. Charles Packe was geologist, botanist, cartographer, and scholar (climbing with Horace in his pocket). He was also the squire of Stretton Hall, the Leicestershire gentleman

A Grotto on the Vignemale

who found the Pyrenees more exciting than the hunting field. Much of this was concealed by a brusque manner, for though a modest man he was not an easy one. He began his systematic exploration of the chain in 1859. When a companion was killed on the Pic de Sauvegarde in the same year, while no doubt perturbed, he was clearly not deflected. Noting Jurassic limestone, greensand, names of rare flowers, barometric pressures and making in the uncharted country expedition on expedition, he accumulated knowledge. It found expression in the first guide-book to the central Pyrenees and the first map of the Maladetta area. At this remove the methodical explorer allows a single welcome glimpse of the eccentric squire: on solitary expeditions he roped with Ossoïe and Azor, his great Pyrenean sheep-dogs. Thus a hundred years ago, but surely in misplaced confidence, he crossed a frozen tarn, and perhaps negotiated the icefields of the Aneto.

'Mon ami Packe,' the phrase recurs throughout the writings of Count Henri Patrick Marie Russell-Killough. The latter's was an affectionate and generous character. Born in France, and heir to a papal title, Russell was an Irish catholic. These facts were less important to him than the works of Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Byron, and the mountains which he always saw in some part through their eyes. His life was a late but heroic expression of the romantic era. From that era both his literary style—for he had weird but considerable talent as a writer—and his attitudes derived much of their bravura. Charm, passion, eccentricity, created his legend; there have been many less well founded. As a young man he wrote verse, played the fiddle, and would dance all night ("effréné valseur" they said) before starting on a thirty-mile walk at dawn. His romantic daemon sent him briefly and disastrously to sea, and led him in his early twenties happily across Siberia, to Australia, to New Zealand (where he was lost for three days in the Alps alone and without food), to the Americas, and even to within sight of Everest. On his return in 1863, at the age of twenty-nine, he first climbed the Aneto and met Packe. The rest of his life was, quite simply, devoted to the Pyrenees.

The range brought him something like European fame. He made at least sixteen first ascents, and it is in character that many of them should have been solitary. On the other hand his contribution to

the scientific knowledge of the chain was negligible. It would have been illogical to expect otherwise. In his writings, above all in *Souvenirs d'un Montagnard*, he made a different contribution, an eloquent apology for an emotional approach to mountains. The Pyrenees that claimed him were not Packe's. 'Je respecte,' he wrote, 'et j'envie ceux pour qui la montagne est autre chose qu'une idole. Je suis jaloux de ceux que la géodésie, l'anatomie des pics et l'éclimetre, passionnent autant que la voix des torrents, la pourpre des précipices, et l'incendie des neiges au coucher du soleil. Mais a chacun son rôle . . . Le mien fut de marcher et de sentir.'

The Count's almost obsessive feeling for the Pyrenees found its most satisfying expression in his relationship with the Vignemale. This reads like some complicated love affair. Rising in the Grande Vignemale, the highest peak of the French Pyrenees, to 10,820 feet, provided with the most shapely glacier in the range and some of the most forbidding precipices, the mountain held him from childhood. He reached its summit thirty-three times, making his last ascent at the age of seventy. Long before then he had felt the need to achieve a closer and more prolonged contact with the Vignemale than was possible by mere mountaineering. Nothing would satisfy but a home not far from the summit, where he could if necessary live for days at a time and know his mountain in all seasons, and in storm as well as settled weather. The idea of building among palaces of ice, schist, and marble, seemed impertinent. A grotto was the only acceptable solution: 'une œuvre humaine, mais qui n'en eut pas l'air, et ou en ne devinerait pas la main de l'homme: en un mot un abri qui eut l'air naturel.'

No one knew better than Count Russell that a grotto was not to be found on the Vignemale. He decided to carve his own from solid rock. In the summer of 1880 he began to look for a site, and in the course of his search spent the night of August 16th on the Grande Vignemale in most curious circumstances. As light began to fail, his two companions, peasant-mountaineers from Gavarnie, were instructed to dig a grave upon the summit. Then, laid out in his sheep-skin bag, he gave orders for his burial. Having covered him to the neck in a cumbrous blanket of stone and soil, his companions retreated to shelter some way below the summit. With a vivid

A Grotto on the Vignemale

anticipation of pleasure, the Count awaited the night and the cold. 'L'ami Packe' one feels would not have approved such eccentricity.

A few hundred feet beneath the buried Count a still and level sea of cloud stretched from horizon to horizon. At times he seemed already to have left the earth and to be floating above it; at others to be watching from a last rocky eminence the earth's slow and final inundation. When the moon rose shortly before midnight the ocean of cloud, as though the light infected it with fever, began to stir and shudder. There was now unceasing agitated movement that threw up plumes of grey spray and hurled breakers against invisible shoals. Yet the cloud level did not rise; even, as the night wore on, it began to sink and, like the retreating Flood, rendered up one dripping summit after another. All this apparently in a windless silence, as unnatural as death. The temperature dropped to minus three degrees centigrade and a hoar frost whitened the grave and the Count's pointed beard. What, he wondered, would have been the effect on some benighted mountaineer, chancing to find on such a summit a frozen decapitated head? Madness, he concluded, and fell asleep.

This night may be regarded as the last dedicated vigil of his novitiate; it was prelude to long and arduous possession of the mountain. The chosen site for his grotto was in the wall of rock that bars the head of the Ossoue glacier at 10,500 feet. The vagaries of the glacier were later to present an unexpected challenge; meanwhile for two summers there was a coming and going along its crevassed length of peasants and miners, carrying explosives, wood and food. The haul was made from the village of Gèdre over 7,000 feet below, and the Count always superintended from the most advanced positions. Sometimes the glacier was in thick mist and they moved slowly, step by step, among the gulfs. Sometimes plastered in falling snow, the flakes large as florins, they looked like white statues. Sometimes they fought foot by foot against the wind. More than other mountains in the range, the Vignemale has a reputation for great storms. They dosed down, all of them, under a large heavily-tarred canvas. Tools broke, the explosives got wet, but by the beginning of August 1882 the grotto was ready.

The first night was spent there with his friend, Francis Swan. They slept comfortably on hay; without a fire the temperature was seven

degrees centigrade. In the following year Miss Swan became the first lady visitor. The owner was beginning to settle in. It is curious to watch the splendid obsession grow, the sojourns in the grotto multiply in number and length. Three days, four days, nine days . . . He makes neighbours; the snow-finches begin to rely on his visits. From his doorstep, he saves two young English mountaineers, lost and exhausted, who have fallen into a crevasse. Mass is celebrated in the grotto by the Abbé Pomès. Some of the thirty who attend kneel on the glacier outside and the snow about them is reddened by the dawn. Soon a single grotto is not enough. In 1885 the *Grotte des Guides* follows, in 1886 the modest *Grotte des Dames*. The possession of the mountain seems complete. As though to celebrate the fact an extraordinary scene is enacted, recalling an Arabian banquet displaced in temperature and altitude. The Comte de Monts (significant name) appears with friends and a capacious tent rises on the glacier before the grottoes. Columns sculptured in frozen snow flank its entrance and the approach is a lawn of red lichens, *silene acaulis* and *androsace carnea*. Persian carpets are spread and white napery. They decant the vintage wines and carve the huge *jambon de Bayonne*, looking in its coat of fat like a marble boulder; reclining on cushions they burn oriental perfumes and long Havana cigars. There is not air enough to sway even the lanterns and for three days the barometer is steady.

But the Vignemale demanded more of this lover. In 1887 the glacier began to stir, as the cloud ocean had stirred, but slowly rising against the rock face, lapping steadily higher. The lower grottoes disappeared like foundered ships. Only the *Grotte des Dames* remained accessible. With unbroken spirit but something like a broken heart, the Count withdrew from his advanced position to just under 7,900 feet. There in 1888 at the foot of the Ossoüe glacier a new grotto was hollowed out of the mountain. *Bellevue* faced south and a spring for the first time made him independent of melted snow-water. Two ancillary grottoes followed. With their Freudian overtones, there is something desperate about these penetrations, these determined acts of love. But the true object of veneration was now 3,000 feet above, *Bellevue* seemed like the plain, and Russell sat there longing for the harsh glare of snow, the lammergeiers,

A Grotto on the Vignemale

and the precipices. By 1892 he felt his position intolerable ; the more so since the mountain had now for some years been *his*. The seven surrounding communes had, with imagination, legalised his relationship, presenting him with the four summits of the Vignemale and the glacier that flowed down to his door.

To seal his devotion he determined, with a supreme effort, to build his last and seventh grotto at the summit of the Grande Vignemale itself. Four men worked for over a month in vain. Only when he brought up dynamite in 1893 was the thing accomplished and the Count lodged at nearly 10,820 feet. *Le Paradis* also faced south and proved beautifully dry. It was the reward of a long and ardent attachment, surely one of the most intense in the history of mountaineering. There, in his sixtieth year, he celebrated in his own phrase the 'silver wedding' of his first ascent.

The Award

BY R. PRAWER JHABVALA

DEV PRAKASH had already met too many such young men during the past nine years. Research students, junior lecturers, journalists whose articles seldom got into print—they seemed to be the only people who took any interest in him.

"What I am intending for my thesis," said the young man, "is to show how Indian writing has developed since Independence."

"I see," said Dev Prakash, nodding his big head with the two heavy chins and the long greying hair sagely up and down. He had an impressive literary-lion manner, which did not betray the sense of failure and neglect he was at present feeling.

"Perhaps if you could give me some hints about present-day writings," said the young man. "With special reference to your own works."

"My own works," Dev Prakash repeated, his interest stirred. He passed a large dimpled hand over his noble brow. "Whatever I have written, whatever little I may have achieved, my inspiration has been, always : India." Who repaid him by ignoring him, wasting him, passing him over. For twenty-five years he had been what he called in exile and now that he had come home, he felt more exiled than ever. Yet he had come with such high hopes : the Tagore of today, that was what he had hoped they would call him. "What can I tell you about my own works ? They are there, to be read or to be ignored, to be loved or to be scorned."

The young man, who had his thesis to think of, was more practical : "If perhaps you could outline for me your position in regard to other Indian writers of today."

Dev Prakash leaned back against a bolster. He looked up at the ceiling with a self-tolerant little smile on his lips : "Of course, I have always been something of an odd-man-out."

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His sister Usha came in and said, "We are having a dinner party this evening." She took no notice of the young man; like all the well-dressed well-fed women of her set, she had horrible manners.

"Your dull, dull dinners," said Dev Prakash with a conspiratorial smile at the young man who, however, was looking down at the papers in his lap in swollen embarrassment.

"You will be here?" Usha asked, unmoved by his comment. Most things left her unmoved; she was a tall, slow, heavy woman with a stout, faintly moustached face out of which her magnificent dark eyes looked with boredom and discontent.

In spite of his very sociable nature, Dev Prakash disliked these dinner parties which his sister and her husband gave. The food was always too heavy and too much, the guests too rich and too fat; and nobody had anything at all to say. But Aruna was not free in the evening and he had nowhere else to go; so he put on a mock-martyr air and said, "If you command me." There was so little social life for him nowadays.

She opened his wardrobe. "What will you wear?" She looked up and down the shelves and clicked her tongue. "You never have anything nice." By 'nice' she meant silk shirts and English-style jackets; whereas he was, on the one hand, too Indian and, on the other, too bohemian, ever to wear anything but the national clothes of homespun cotton.

"What can you expect from a poor scribbler like me," he replied with another smile at the young man; who, this time, responded—though wrongly, for he looked up not with an answering smile but with a look of astonishment. Dev Prakash was put out for a moment: he had forgotten that his opulent surroundings—the heavy furniture, the marble floors, the silver and the uniformed servants of his sister's household—were not really consonant with a poor scribbler. But he had always liked to refer to himself in such terms; it had been easier in London, of course, where the quaintly untidy rooms he had rented in Bloomsbury had not betrayed the handsome allowance that was sent to him every quarter from his share of the family business.

The young man surprisingly said, "As junior lecturer I get a salary of only 350 rupees a month."

Usha turned round from the wardrobe to look at him with distaste.

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Dev Prakash cleared his throat and ran his hand in a soft, slightly dandified movement over his shoulder-length hair.

"If I get Ph.D., I can become senior lecturer and get a salary of 650 rupees rising to 900 rupees."

Dev Prakash thought of England. Whenever he was depressed by India and Indians, he thought of England.

"That is why I am very anxious to complete this thesis and satisfy the examiners."

He thought of interesting people with whom one could have interesting conversations. There had been the evenings in his rooms in Bloomsbury and other evenings in Isabel's flat in Chelsea: the cosy lamplight, the cigarettes and cups of coffee and cultured witty people talking of literature and the arts.

Usha shut the wardrobe and sat down in an armchair, with her legs spread wide in front of her; she exercised her toes with the freshly-painted nails and looked at them as she did so. There was nothing studied about the way she ignored the existence of the young man; his insignificance was too real for her to have to take up an attitude about it. He realised it and suffered, keeping his eyes lowered and pressing his knees together in an unnecessary effort at further self-effacement. Dev Prakash also suffered; he had lived a long time among people who made a cult of personal relationships and kept up a social behaviour as studied and scrupulous as Usha's was the reverse. He turned to the young man and addressed him with more cordiality than he felt: "You must stress in your thesis," he said, smiling unnecessarily, "that we are all of us only pioneers."

The young man straightened the papers on his knees and continued to put the questions with which he had come prepared. "I would like to know your opinion of your poem 'My Country is a Rose in My Heart.'"

Dev Prakash settled himself on his divan, supporting his cheek against his large dimpled hand, and said in a richly reminiscent mood: "Let me tell you something of the circumstances under which it was written."

Usha was yawning; she opened her mouth very wide and did not bother to cover it with her hand.

"I was an exile from my country. Oh perhaps, from day to day,

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I did not suffer acutely—I had friends, even a little recognition ; I visited the theatre, there were parties—I had made some sort of a life there." He had had many friends in England. Plump and sensuous in the tight-fitting Indian clothes he wore, with his deep dark eyes in which one could read, if one wanted to, all the sufferings of the East, he was always a success with Englishwomen ; and his patriotic sentiments, which he enunciated in a low soft voice vibrating with feeling, woke a warm glow of indignation against oppression in all the right-thinking advanced circles in which he moved. "A life of exile, yes, though, from day to day, not really a bad life, not really a sad life. But all the time," and he straightened himself up on the divan and his hand groped towards his heart and his eyes burned, "there was this Ache."

The young man, his back straight, his mouth prim, nodded and with poised pencil made a note.

"An unhealing wound in the heart," said Dev Prakash. He shut his eyes and quoted with passion : "'The rose is weeping—but not tears, ah my heart ! not tears.'" Goocy, Isabel had said ; she was a handsome no-nonsense woman with an Oxford degree who wrote sensitive novels about personal relationships. He had liked, even sometimes loved her—but he had always been brought up short by this lack of depth in her, this failure to feel passionately. "'Drop by drop my rose weeps out its blood,'" he said and he still felt it, that tear-wringing emotion that had made him write the poem. He opened his eyes, in which there were now tears as often happened when he quoted his own work ; he saw that the young man too was moved. And even Usha sighed, for she also was capable of deep feeling.

"A beautiful poem, sir," said the young man. Dev Prakash lowered his head in proud humility. It was true, he had had congenial company in England, a literary life, a flattering interest in himself and his work ; while in India he had none of these. But from time to time, as now, he was glad that he had come home : when he felt that spontaneous love and understanding of his work—which meant of himself, of his soul—which he found he could get only from Indians.

Usha said, "It is very moving." She was materialistic, even crude,

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too fond of food and clothes and the ostentation of money ; yet, more than clever, sensitive Isabel, she had this well of feeling in her to respond to the profound and the poetic.

"Sometimes people asked me," Dev Prakash said, "how can you, an Indian, bear to live in exile from your country ? There was only one answer I could give." His passionate eyes gazed impressively into the distance as he quoted this answer : "'It is better than to live as a slave in one's own land.'" Though this was no longer an answer he could give after Independence. He had not returned until 1950, three years later. He had got so used to England and his cosy shabby rooms in Bloomsbury, it had been difficult to leave.

"What sort of a life can you lead there," said Usha, with some contempt. She admired many things English, such as sofa-sets, novelty lampstands, and leather handbags, but despised the English for their food and their climate and the way they lived, and perhaps also for being English and not opulent and sensual the way she was.

"An exile's life," said Dev Prakash with a shrug. Though really it was only after Independence that he had felt this exile status acutely. He had found then that people no longer regarded him in the same light. There had even seemed to be, though of course no one had ever spoken it, an undermining undercurrent of why doesn't he go home ? And, indeed, that was a question that had also occurred to him very frequently, and to which he had often weighed the answers.

The young man said, "For my thesis I would like to illustrate with many quotations," but before he had finished saying it, there was a commotion of arrival outside, a female voice called, "He is here ?"—and then the door opened, and she came in, Aruna, rustling with silk, jingling with bracelets, her face glowing, her mouth smiling in expectation, eager and all on tiptoe to impart some exciting news. "Guess what I have heard today !" she called to Dev Prakash, shining at him with pride and love. She stepped nearer and held out a plump bejewelled hand to him : "My great man of letters !" she said, and the way she said it, caressing him with her voice and her eyes, made the young man look down at his papers. Dev Prakash indicated him with his chin : "This young man is writing a thesis on modern Indian writers."

Aruna turned around to him. She had not noticed him, on her

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first entrance ; she had better manners than Usha and did not make a habit of ignoring unimportant people. But now she made up to him for her neglect by turning her brilliant eyes and smile on him ; she cried in a radiant voice, "There you have the greatest of them all !" —shooting out her short forefinger at Dev Prakash, who thought really, what is the matter with her. "You know what I heard to-day ?" she said to the young man, and she twinkled and smiled at him, teasing him to guess. But she could not wait any longer. She clasped her hands together and threw back her head and announced, "He has won the Akademi award !"

Dev Prakash said, "Who told you ?" His heart was beating fast with excitement and fears that it might not be true.

Usha and Aruna were embracing. There had been a time when Usha had taken moral exception to Aruna, but nowadays they got on very well together. They embraced with tenderness and called one another sister. "It is a proud day," said Aruna, and now she was dabbling a little bit in the corner of her eye

The young man had also got up. He said, "How happy I am to be able to be the first to give you my congratulations." Usha did not let him finish ; she asked Aruna, "Where did you hear ?"

"I have my little sources," answered she, smiling slyly, which suited her.

"It is all nonsense," said Dev Prakash in a voice he tried to make firm.

"So your triumph and my joy are nonsense ?" She playfully turned on him. She caressed his shoulder in a way that forced the young man to look down again. Dev Prakash shrugged her off ; his attitude towards her was always one of mingled love and exasperation and at the moment, as often happened, it was mostly exasperation. "If you will just tell me——" he said.

"Is it in the paper ?" asked Usha. "I have not seen it this morning." She hardly ever saw it ; she was not really interested in anything.

"Gokhale told me," Aruna said.

"Gokhale !" Dev Prakash exclaimed, not in surprise but in disgust, at which Aruna took offence. She said, "If he would not know, then who would ? He is still the Minister."

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"You are talking of Mr. Gokhale, the Government Minister?" the young man said with awe and respect.

"Of course you would believe everything *he* says," sneered Dev Prakash.

"And why not?" Aruna had taken up a challenging attitude now and her nostrils were distended. She scented a quarrel, and she had a real flair for quarrels.

"For years he has been pretending to be in love with you . . ."

"Why pretending?" said Aruna. "Why should he not love me?" and she smiled in haughty triumph.

"That cunuch," said Dev Prakash, forgetting the young man.

She gave out a gasp of pretended horror: "How impure your mind is."

The young man said, "How happy I am to be able to be the first to give you my congratulations."

"Gokhale," Dev Prakash snorted.

"Go then, go!" she shouted. "See if you can find out from better information!" She crossed her arms challengingly on her bosom. They often quarrelled, she and Dev Prakash; they got terribly irritated with one another, so much so that sometimes, when they were alone together, they even pinched and slapped at one another in mutual anger. It was very different from Dev Prakash's life with cool, sensible Isabel.

"Certainly! I will!" said Dev Prakash, and marched out to the telephone. Yet, with his hand already on the receiver, he knew it was not dignified for him to try and find out. Distinguished men of letters did not enquire about awards: these should be brought to them by respectful emissaries. He dialled a number, any number.

In the room Aruna smoothed herself, settled herself with dignity on the divan. "A minister's word is not good enough for him," she said indignantly. But next moment she was smiling and shining again. She clapped her hands together and said, "Usha, think, the Akademi award!" To the younger man she said, "He is such a great man, such a poet!"

"I feel honoured," said the young man, "to be the first——"

"He has suffered in his life for his country and his art," said Aruna.

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"Just think, for twenty-five years he lived in exile—twenty-five years, because he could not bear to be a slave!"

"The English winters are very cold," said Usha. "Every year he suffered from chilblains."

"And when he came back, they did not give him the recognition he deserved," said Aruna. "Sometimes India does not know how to honour her great men. What is he doing out there by the telephone?" She jumped up and ran out to him. He was dialling another random number. She took the receiver from him and whispered, "It is true. Really." She pressed herself against him, soft flesh against soft flesh. "How happy I am."

"It is so improbable," said Dev Prakash. "I—the odd-man-out . . ."

"For once they have chosen right!" Aruna cried. "For once this honour has not gone to some poor conforming hack!" This last was his phrase: he had used it every year, when the State Award had gone, as it always had gone up to now, to someone else.

In the room the young man, emboldened by the specialness of the occasion, was making conversation with Usha. "He is much respected in University circles," he was saying. Usha was abstractedly scratching her thigh, which produced a rustling sound from her silk sari. "We call him the Tagore of today," said the young man. Usha went on scratching, but Aruna, returning hand in hand with Dev Prakash, cried, "Yes, yes, how true!" And then she bent down and touched his feet, with the reverence of a devotee and the grace of a lover.

He raised her; he was full of dignity now. He turned to the young man and said with true humility, "I am not worthy of the mantle of the Master."

"There is a dinner party tonight," Usha told Aruna. "You will come?"

"How I would love to! But I promised the girls . . ." Aruna, a widow, was the mother of three teen-age daughters whom she adored with fierce love. "We shall celebrate some other day. How we shall celebrate for our hero!" And she threw him a look so ravishing, so worshipping, that his heart brimmed over and he felt, as he sometimes did, that he had never never, in all his not uneventful

life, loved anyone as he loved her. "There will be music, poetry, champagne to drink ! The Prime Minister himself shall come to honour you. I will make him." Which no doubt she could, for she had, by right of herself and her family, access and affection in many places. She turned to the young man : "You too are invited to our party. Please come."

The young man pressed his hands together and thanked her in a voice thick with joy and embarrassment. He had never been asked to a party before. Usha said, "Where will you have it ?" She ranged her mind over her wardrobe, could think of nothing suitable for the occasion, and made up her mind to buy a new sari.

But Dev Prakash was suffering doubts again. "It is strange that no one has seen fit to inform me," he said, looking accusingly at Aruna.

The young man said, "Will it be a formal party ?" Like Usha, he was thinking of his wardrobe, which was highly inadequate.

"It was only decided last night," Aruna said. "Gokhale told me——"

"Gokhale," said Dev Prakash with the same contempt as before.

"You are only jealous," teased Aruna, playing coquette.

Usha said, "Perhaps we can make a garden party."

"What cause have I given you to be jealous ?" said Aruna in a low tender voice, bringing her face near to his. But he drew back ; he was too agitated to be loving. On the contrary, he was irritated with her for not taking trouble to confirm the news.

"More people can be accommodated on the lawn," Usha said, "than in the drawing-room."

Aruna, always quick to follow a lead, took the loving expression off her face and assumed a sulky one instead. "It is I, not you, who have cause," she hinted darkly. He knew she referred to the years before they had met, the years in England. She could never hear enough about them. "And then ?" she would ask eagerly, while he, smiling in sweet reminiscence, allowed himself to be drawn out into intimate details about his life with Isabel and others. She would listen, glowing with sympathy, happy that he had had so much happiness ; leading him on until he became almost maudlin with tender nostalgia ; and it was always at this point that she would suddenly

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turn on him. "How dare you tell me such things!" she would shout, and then she would begin to abuse him with astonishing vulgarity. A fierce quarrel followed, which always ended with her jumping out of bed and putting on her clothes with insulting haste, while she thanked God that she still had three lovely beautiful innocent girls to go home to, and had no need of him.

Usha said, "Ragho Mull's can do the catering. They are very good for a garden party."

"Nobody knows if it is true or not, and already you are arranging for the catering!" Dev Prakash, scattering his dignity, suddenly shouted at her. He felt like shouting at someone and was afraid to do so at Aruna. Indeed, now that he was angry with someone else, she was all solicitude. "You know it is bad for you to upset yourself," she admonished him, seating herself beside him on the divan, stroking his sleeve and making gentle clucking noises to soothe her ruffled lion.

Usha said placidly, "Arrangements must be made in good time always."

The young man suddenly turned to Aruna: "If the function is to be formal, I may not be able to attend."

"And a garden party always needs many special arrangements."

"I may perhaps not have any right clothes to wear," the young man explained to Aruna; and, assured of her sympathy, blurted out further, "You see, it is difficult for me to buy clothes, I have many obligations."

"But of course it will be quite informal!" Aruna cried. Too late, however, for he had already been seized by a passion to show himself and his life to her completely. "My mother and my widowed aunt are both living with me—I have to support them. And there is also schooling for my children—I have four children—and rents today are very high, and doctors' bills also must be paid." He sighed. "Life for me is often very difficult."

Aruna sighed with him. "Yes, life has many trials for us all."

"I cannot afford to spend anything on myself—for three years now I have not been able to have any new clothes sewn." He looked down ruefully at his trousers, shrunk to the ankle, at his shirt, very clean but genteelly frayed at collar and cuffs. "It will be difficult

for me to come to your party like this—I shall feel ashamed before your other guests."

Dev Prakash, who had been in England in the angry '30s and the democratic '40s and had absorbed all the best ideas, drew himself up to his full poet's dignity. His chest swelled, his large head with the long hair and plump chin and cheeks became almost leonine. "My friend," he said in a deep sonorous commanding voice. "The simpleness of your attire is in our eyes not a drawback but even a recommendation." He left a pause for emphasis, but Aruna ruined it for him: "In our India," she cried, "it is only the simple man we admire, he who wants nothing from the world! Look at our Mahatma, what did he wear? One loincloth, finished—and yet, was there ever a greater man?"

"I was going to say," said Dev Prakash with dignified patience, "that in spite of the example of the Mahatma and other great spirits, we Indians lay too great a value on mere outward appearance."

Usha, for whom this conversation held no interest, was staring in front of her with heavy eyes. She wriggled a toe and felt dissatisfaction with her life, though she could not have said what it was she wanted in place of what she had.

"We are," said Dev Prakash, placing his hands on his knees tight and plump in their white leggings, "materialistic in the worst sense of the word." Outside the telephone was ringing. Dev Prakash raised his hands from his knees and became eloquent: "'What need for me but the garden of the spirit in which to walk with my Beloved,'" he quoted from his own works.

"How beautiful," said Aruna.

A servant came in to call Dev Prakash to the telephone. When he had gone, Aruna said with an admiring sigh, "He is such a poet, such a fine soul, he sees everything different from ordinary people."

The young man told her, "I am very anxious to better my position."

"It is our duty in life to strive," she sympathised.

"If I complete my thesis and am successful in obtaining the Ph.D. degree, I can apply for the position of senior lecturer."

Usha, thinking back to the new sari she contemplated buying, said, "There is a good selection of Benares silks in the shops." Her voice

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was languid and yawning, for though she regarded the acquisition of new things as a necessity, she had no real passion for them.

"As senior lecturer I can earn higher salary," the young man said.

Dev Prakash stood framed in the doorway; his face glowed from out of his prophet-like hair. "It seems your information was correct," he told Aruna in a voice he tried to keep steady.

She rose to her feet. The young man rose too. They stood looking at Dev Prakash. "The Akademi award," Aruna said in a breathless happy voice.

"But you knew," Usha pointed out.

"Of course I knew!" she cried. She flew to the cupboard under his desk in which Dev Prakash kept a bottle of rum and glasses for visitors who cared for that kind of thing. She was inexpert with the bottle, but she managed to pour four drinks. "At least some little celebration there must be!"

The young man tried to excuse himself—he never touched spirits—but she insisted. So they all four stood drinking the rum none of them liked. Dev Prakash was grave and contained, vibrating with fulfilment. There had been gayer parties in England, wittier people, better drink which was drunk with enjoyment; but never had he felt there this oneness, this love, this union of spirit.

The young man said, "How auspicious it is for me that I am here today."

"You also will be successful," Aruna said. She put down her glass and shed glad tears: "What happiness, such happiness," she said, loving everyone.

A Conversation on Feet

BY ELSPETH DAVIE

TWO women were walking in single file along a high ridge overlooking the sea. Behind them the path narrowed steeply and at its highest point disappeared into a mere sandy track running along the cliff's edge, but in front it gradually broadened and flattened out until eventually, far down below, it became part of the smooth white promenade which stretched round the whole of the bay. At the far end of this bay was their hotel. Just at that point on the path where usually they began hurrying forward to be in time for supper the younger woman fell behind a little; she seemed to be smiling to herself. These two things had a vaguely disconcerting effect on her friend, but she attributed this feeling to the pressure of time and began to glance from her watch to the hotel which was still a long distance away. But in a moment the other had made up on her and they were walking side by side again.

"It was a curious sensation," said the younger woman who was called Sarah, "though it must be a very common one. I felt it for the first time the other night when I was taking the short cut from the post office along that path by the ploughed field. I was wearing my sandals. You know the ones I mean?"

"Your old sandals—yes. I suppose it was worth bringing them, if only to save the other ones for evening. Well, what happened to you, Sarah?"

"You remember Tuesday—it was the first really warm day, and the ground was bone dry. The soles of my sandals are so thin you can feel the earth pressing against the arches of your feet. It's as though you were walking barefoot."

"I don't wonder, Sarah; they're nearly done—those sandals. They'll hardly survive another holiday. One of the soles is actually

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worn right through at one part. And there's nothing you can do about that—not with crêpe. When we get back to town you could try that shop again, but I doubt if they'll have them now—not exactly those ones, anyway."

"... barefoot. It was not so much the feeling of simply walking on top of the ground or using the ground to get along to some other place. There was no division between earth and feet. I discovered for the first time what the ground was actually made of and how the different parts of my foot were shaped. Of course there's no such thing as a flat piece of ground; you can feel all sorts of unevenness—those tufts of cold, slippery grass and perhaps at the next step a mound of fine, very warm earth that fills up your shoes like dust, and even on the driest day cold hollows, rather damp, where a stone has been dislodged. And the stones themselves are all shapes—round ones rolling under your feet and those little sharp flinty ones that get wedged inside the soles of your shoes."

"What happened, Sarah? Did you hurt your foot?"

"Suddenly in a flash, no, not a flash—it's more like a beat, or is it the feeling of actually missing a beat . . ."

"You didn't fall, Sarah? Why didn't you tell me. Was it on your back?"

"Suddenly in this instant I knew what it would be like to fall in love. Do you understand what I mean?"

There was a very short silence. Then Nora, the other woman, spoke again:

"I know the path you mean, of course—you could hardly call it a path; it's almost part of the field; and full of stones as you say. Was it your foot or did you actually fall down?"

"Suddenly I had an idea what they were all getting at—the songs and the poems and especially those scraps from dance-bands that blare out from radio stores as you go past. For the first time I actually felt the love in them."

"Through your feet?"

"I'm trying to tell you—that's how it was."

The path was clearly broadening now and it would have been possible to walk side by side and still have plenty of room to swing about or gesticulate freely with the arms. All the same the two women

walked within some carefully prescribed limit of their own. They seemed to take enormous care about this as though it was necessary to control not only their own movements but also, by looking straight ahead, to curb the tremendous energy of the sea below them on one side, and on their other side to ensure the continued balance of the huge black boulders which appeared to have been savagely ripped from the hills above and tossed right to the cliff's edge where they had stood for a millennium—as though still rocking with their fall—in mocking positions of appalling insecurity. Occasionally one woman would fall behind for a moment to let another person go past—someone coming up from the town, climbing slowly—someone perhaps who was staying at one of the boarding-houses where supper could be as much as an hour earlier than the hotel meal.

"Those songs you mentioned," said Nora, making an effort to place her feet absolutely steadily on the path which, though it had broadened out, had not begun to be smooth; "—were you referring to popular songs—pop singers? I mean the ones that rhyme 'blue' and 'you' and 'true'?"

"That kind of thing—yes."

"I believe they are not very difficult to make up."

"No, I don't think they could be."

"I should think almost anybody could do it."

"I'm not sure about that; but at any rate some people must find it easy."

"And make a great deal of money. It is not difficult to find words to rhyme with 'love', either."

"Oh, no. I can think of two or three straight off."

"I expect they are exactly the same ones I am thinking of—'glove,' 'dove,' 'above.'"

"Yes, you're right; those are the ones."

"Can you think of any more?"

"Not just for the moment."

Nora had fallen a step or two behind her friend through some momentary depression. It seemed as though something which was important to her had not been proved.

"No, it's got to be clearer than that, Sarah," she said, making up the short distance between them again. "I'm sorry, but all this about

A Conversation on Feet

shoes and feet ; it's not like you. I wish you hadn't brought feet into it, Sarah."

"Why not ?"

"We've known one another long enough, haven't we ? I'd have thought that by this time you might sometimes find it possible to be a little more direct with me—that's all."

"Well, I'm direct as I can be, Nora. I can't make it much plainer—what I felt—can I ?"

"Do you think so ? Well, it's just your way, isn't it, Sarah, and I daresay you'll tell me some other time when it suits you."

"Tell you what ?"

"Oh, that you've met some man or other that you like."

"Some man I like !"

"All right. Do you want me to use the word 'love' ? I don't intend to go into it. I'm just asking you to be a little more open with me. We'd get on better, and it would be more human, to say the least."

"But I haven't met any man."

"That's all right, Sarah. You need say nothing more about it—not another word. What do you take me for ? Have I ever asked you one single thing about your personal life ?"

"Never, Nora."

"Have I, in all the time we've known one another, ever tried to find out anything about your private affairs ?"

"You never have, Nora."

"Or even about your family or any of your other friends ?"

"Never at any time."

"All right then, Sarah. Let's leave it at that. Only please don't treat me like a creature who knows nothing and feels nothing. After all, it's not the first occasion that a woman on holiday remembers—or even actually meets—some man she's attracted to. She has more time, of course."

" . . . Or who's attracted to *her*."

"Of course—that goes without saying."

"It's better to say it, all the same. Though in this case neither seems to fit."

"Meaning . . . ?"

Elspeth Davie

"There's no particular man in it."

"Ah, so we're back to that are we?"

"We seem to be. Only it was you who brought in the subject of men."

"I must say it seems rather odd," said her friend, laughing lightly.

"If it's no particular man—what is it? Just men in general, I suppose."

"Yes, as a matter of fact that seems to get nearer it. You could say the feeling was for every man."

Now there was a long silence and the older woman looked before her with a grim, hurt smile. In front of them the whole sky seemed to have darkened slightly, but the sun was still hot on their backs. As though materialising suddenly from the empty spaces behind, a large family party went tramping past—bringing a murmured exchange of greetings as they went by. Even in the short time they took to pass it was possible to see that between them they were sporting an extraordinary variety of footwear—Nora saw wellington boots, high-heeled shoes, galoshes, sandals and plimsoles; the smallest child wore a pair of scarlet sand-shoes with white gulls on them. The six of them had managed to churn up the soft path for some distance ahead, and although walking with her eyes on the ground, she found it difficult to decipher the various footprints they made. Yet it seemed important to her that she should make out at least one clear set of marks before the hard white concrete fifty yards or so in front hid all human trace.

Sarah said, as though having thought the whole matter through clearly and completely:

"... And not necessarily all men either—all women, if you like—or stones, chairs, railings, milk-bottles—or just bits of glass..."

"Kettles?" asked the other woman. Her smile was wild and despairing.

"Yes, if you like," said Sarah politely.

The path took a last steep turn and they were onto the concrete which brought them down quickly and smoothly into the narrow end of the long High Street. On one side was the dark green sea rolling in over a beach of black stones—on the other a row of small, expensive shops—a jeweller's, a tea-shop, a chemist, and a shoe-shop displaying in its window every type of summer sandal. Even though the going

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was now so smooth one of the women seemed to be limping slightly. She looked very tired.

"It's a relief to get off the subject of feet, anyway," she remarked, glancing once at the shops and then quickly away to the dark sea on the other side. "Or was it shoes? It may be harmless enough—the way you talk; and feet are all right. But you can go too far like that."

"On my feet, you mean?"

"Don't smile at me. I'm often unhappy about you, Sarah. And I feel that we are neither of us open enough with one another. I am at fault too—I admit it. And in your case all this love you have for stones and men and women and chairs and kettles hasn't made you very expansive, has it? Has it even made you very loving, Sarah—that's what I'd really like to ask? I mean to any thing or person in particular?"

"I think you're probably right, Nora. I wouldn't say it has."

"I mean if the feeling's spread so wide over everything, it's bound to get fairly thin."

"Yes, if you think of it like jam—I suppose it is."

"I don't think of it like jam," said Nora. But she seemed less tense now, and her walk was easier. Even Sarah had a more good-natured expression. And the hotel was now so near you could see the children at the upper windows leaning out over their damp, striped towels and tipping the small stones out of the heels of their shoes onto the window-sills.

"If ever you want to tell a love-story about yourself or anyone else I wouldn't begin with your feet, if I were you," said Nora with a faint smile. "Feeling everything through your feet is one thing, and explaining it is another. You see, people don't really want to hear that sort of thing. Don't bother with your feet, Sarah."

The other woman said nothing. By this time they were near enough to hear the clatter from the dining-room as the waitresses finished laying the meal and began to light the little lamps at each table. Yet the sun was still blazing down, red and purple, on the chimneys of the house. Nora felt a slight chill at the strange waste of these lamps—the little lamps burning away in the full blaze of the evening sun.

Elsbeth Davie

"I suppose what you really meant all the time was that you felt something in your heart," she said in an even and encouraging voice.

"No, Nora. It was my feet. I'm sorry. My feet."

"That's all right," said Nora.

Ahead of them the sea was now slashed with sharp little white lines, yet further out near the horizon there was no movement to be seen—only a smooth, grey surface, lightly scratched, as though with a sharp knife. But near at hand waves broke on the black pebbles with a comfortless sound. The women walked on towards the front door of the hotel, moving steadily and slightly apart—any contact between them visible only when the ends of their identical silk scarfs went fluttering back behind them, linked momentarily in a sudden chill gust of wind blowing from the open sea.

One is a Wanderer

Lafcadio Hearn in Matsué

BY FRANCIS KING

Two's company, three's a crowd. But one is a wanderer

JAMES THURBER

IT took Lafcadio Hearn four days to travel by rickshaw from Kobe to Matsué, then as now a remote provincial town on the Japanese Sea ; it took us twice that number of hours. I spent the journey reading Hearn for the first time since I had returned from a visit to his Greek birthplace Levkas (Santa Maura) eight years before. Japanese friends had told me that I ought to read him : to arrive in Matsué and not to be familiar with Hearn's work would be like not being familiar with the plays of Shakespeare on arriving in Stratford. On that previous occasion in the Ionian Islands I had been caught out ; I did not wish to be caught out again.

At Levkas, as my French guide-book put it, 'on couche chez l'habitant' : and the habitant in this case was a young man, a merchant of some kind, who lived with his grandmother. He had little to say to me ; but the old woman, educated by English and French governesses, had far too much. For me Levkas had until then been associated with only one writer, Sappho : it was there from a cliff above the White Cape that, according to legend, she had plunged to her death. O. W. Frost, the author of *Young Hearn*, has envisaged the scene : 'Her figure, petite and bronzed, is garbed in the loose, diaphanous folds of her simple robe . . . Sappho, overcome by carnal desire and yet virginal in the serenity of her poetic genius, contemplates the fiery sun, contemplates the silvery sea . . . The magnificent moment arrives. As she steps from the edge of the precipice, the extremities of her dress extend as wings. Her body is light ; she floats downward

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to the waves. . . . ' It is a pity that the Oxford companion to Classical Literature should say succinctly of all this ' But this is mere romance.' It was not however of Sappho that the old lady wished to talk as we drank tea in a shuttered, high-ceilinged parlour, outside which her grandson was attempting to start up his motor-bicycle, but of a writer whom she called ' Harn.' Slowly it came back to me that that curious name Lafcadio had, of course, derived from the island, Hearn's birthplace : a name which, I now realise, was made even more apposite by the fact that ' Levkas ' itself comes from the Greek verb ' to wander.' Actually, Hearn had always been known as Patrick until he emigrated to America at the age of nineteen ; so that his adoption of the bizarre second name and his rejection of the first may perhaps be regarded as symbolic on the one hand of his surrender to his maternal ancestry and on the other, of his repudiation of whatever was Irish in him. The old woman was related in some way to the Cassimati family, of which Hearn's mother, Rosa, had been a member, and I can remember even now how indignantly she refuted the belief, then unknown to me, that the origins of the family were not Greek but Maltese. The Maltese are not popular in the Ionian Islands : it is often said that they become Greek or British subjects according to convenience, and that their only true loyalty is to themselves. Perhaps she told me something of the dismal story of the illiterate Greek girl, seduced by the young British Army Officer who later married her ; but if she did, I paid little attention on that drowsy afternoon and eight years later I came to it as though it were new.

Hearn's memories of the father whom he never saw after his seventh year—he was brought up by a great-aunt—were always hostile ; and it is easy to see why. ' What if there is " a skeleton in our closet " ? ' he wrote to his brother, Daniel James, who also emigrated to America and there became a farmer. ' Did not he make it ? ' The ' skeleton in the closet ' was their mother's insanity. Speaking hardly a word of English, the bewildered Greek girl had been despatched with her two infant sons to the rigidly Protestant family home in Dublin in 1851, while Charles Hearn served first in the West Indies and then in the Crimean War. Later, while she was holidaying in the Ionian Island, Charles Hearn had their marriage annulled ; and after that she never again saw either of her two children. Once she came back to the

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British Isles in search of them, but she could not discover their whereabouts—each had been farmed out to relatives—and she returned home to her second husband, a Greek lawyer, Cavallini. This atrocious life no doubt accounted for her recurring bouts of mania, culminating in complete insanity. When I spent six months on the island of Corfu, my walks to the house of my closest Greek friends would take me past the National Asylum, and I always dreaded the clamouring of the dishevelled patients who would extend hands through the railings separating their dusty compound from the road and clutch greedily at the cigarettes or sweets which I offered them. Once one of them grabbed my fingers, in which I was holding a packet of Players cigarettes, by then empty, and lowered her head, teeth bared in a crack across her shrivelled, yellow face, presumably to bite me. I managed to pull free. Later, having learned from my friends that she was a harmless old soul who always insisted on kissing the hands of those who gave her anything, I felt duly ashamed. It was here that Hearn's mother spent the last ten demented years of her life. '... Whatever there is good in me—and I believe, whatever there is deeper good in yourself—came from that dark race-soul of which we know so little,' Hearn wrote in that same letter to his brother. 'My love of right, my hate of wrong; my admiration for what is beautiful and true; my capacity for faith in man or woman; my sensitiveness to artistic things which give me what little *success I have*; even that language power whose physical sign is the large eyes of both of us, came from her. . . . I think only of her, and of you, as imaging her possibly, all my life—rarely of him. It is the mother who makes us, makes at least all that makes the nobler man, not his strength or powers of calculation, but his heart and power to love.' From the mother, too—he might have, but did not, add—also came that growing paranoia which drove him to quarrel with almost everyone who had ever befriended him, much like that other literary wanderer, D. H. Lawrence.

At Matsué I had an engagement to lecture at Shimané University; and it is to two of its professors, Professors Kajitani and Mori, that I owe the beginning of my present interest in, and knowledge of, Hearn. Just as, if one wishes to imagine what life must have been like in Japan during the Tokugawa Period, one should visit Kanazawa, so the ghost

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of the Meiji Period seems to cling to Matsué like some flimsily opaque veil. Yet Hearn loved Matsué precisely because it seemed to him so little touched by the new Meiji spirit of expansion, Westernisation, industrialisation and pragmatism. It was the first place in which he settled, it was there that he met his wife, and though, while he lived there, he would often grumble in his letters to his Western correspondents—he had no one congenial with whom to talk; the Siberian cold would put him under ground; he could not survive exclusively upon Japanese fare—yet Matsué was to remain for him, in the years of growing discouragement and disillusion ahead, a Japanese Eden to which he did not dare to return only because he knew, in his inmost being, that if he did so, it would cease to exist.

We had been warned of the Matsué winter—that winter which had made Hearn write to the English scholar, Basil Hall Chamberlain, 'The houses are cold as cattle-barns and the *hibachi* [brazier] and the *kotatsu* [charcoal foot-warmer] are mere shadows of heat—ghosts, illusions'; and so, mindful of nights spent shivering on the floors of Japanese inns, I had brought with me an electric blanket. But I need have had no fears—"Ah, Mr. King, you have brought with you King's weather!", as one of the Shimané University Professors exclaimed. The whole town in the morning lay submerged in a warm, amber light, thickening to rose-tinted mist at the farthest ends of the lake, so that as our two professors led us up the slope to the castle, I felt my skin prick with heat under my heavy over-coat. Of that castle, as of so much else in Matsué, Hearn has written beautifully; and as we stood panting on its topmost storey and gazed down on the town and the gently luminous lake, Professor Kajitani handed me the passage to read:

'Crested at its summit, like a feudal helmet, with two colossal fishes of bronze lifting their curved bodies skyward from either angle of the roof, and bristling with horned gables and gargoyle eaves and tilted puzzles of tiled roofing at every storey, the creation is a veritable architectural dragon, made up of magnificent monstrosities—a dragon, moreover, full of eyes set at all conceivable angles, above, below, and on every side. From under the black scowl of the loftiest eaves, looking east and south, the whole city can be seen at a single glance, as in the vision of a soaring hawk; and from the northern angle the

view plunges down three hundred feet to the castle road, where walking figures of men appear no larger than flies.'

" 'The whole city can be seen at a single glance,' " Professor Kajitani murmured over my shoulder. " 'Three hundred feet to the castle road, where walking figures of men appear no larger than flies.' But you know, Mr. King, Hearn's single glance could take in nothing that was more than ten yards distant from him. Still—" he closed the book gently—" it is very poetic, very exquisite. 'Single glance,' " he repeated once again, this time as if to himself. "Hearn of course had only one eye."

Professor Kajitani's knowledge of Hearn amazed me—if I had said to him "What was Hearn doing at 11.0 a.m. on October 10th, 1890?" I am sure that he could have told me—as did the knowledge of everyone else whom I met. Years ago I once tried, on a whim, to find in Bournemouth the school at which Verlaine, so much greater a writer than Hearn, had been a teacher; but no one could tell me its whereabouts. Yet in Matsue even a child could lead one to the site of the school where Hearn was employed. Hearn's 'immense two-storey wooden building in European style' no longer stands; but if I had not been told this, I should have assumed that the school which has replaced it, and at which we now gazed reverently, was Hearn's 'Jinjo Chugakko.' I asked Professor Kajitani about Hearn's abilities as a teacher. "Oh, he was good, very good. And how hard he worked—sometimes forty hours a week." I thought of some of my English and American colleagues who complain that twelve hours of teaching per week leaves them no time for writing. "One of his pupils is still alive, you know—an old man, he is now more than eighty. Yet it could not have been easy for Hearn. He had never taught before and he knew no Japanese. And these were not University students but boys of fifteen and sixteen. Still, you must have discovered that our students here in Japan are very patient and docile. Except—" he gave a small smile—"when they become interested in politics."

"Yes, Hearn was an excellent teacher," Professor Mori agreed; and though many of Hearn's literary judgements now seem astonishingly perverse to us—for example he preferred Dobson, Watson and Lang to Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley—most Japanese scholars

would support that view. Paradoxically, Hearn was not a born writer—only by dint of endless application did he acquire his literary style—but he was, without doubt, a born teacher. Among other Hearniana assembled by Professor Kajitani in a small booklet are some 'Note [sic] on English Taught by Mr. Lafcadio Hearn' taken by one of his pupils. One reads 'What is the term for the distance to which a gun or rifle or pistol can throw a ball or shell? The term is RANGE. Thus we say a cannon has a RANGE of 2—5—9—12—14 miles.' Astonishing to think that a boy of fifteen or sixteen wrote this down and presumably committed it to memory. 'Herbarium' reads another note, with the Japanese *Kanji* beside it; and then 'herborist.' What University student in modern Japan would know these words? Even odder is the note: 'On [sic] the garden of Mahomet the second there were melons. He told the boys of the palace not to eat the melons. One of the boys ate one of the melons. Mahomet asked who the boy was. All the boys so frightened [sic] that they said they did not know. The Sultan ordered all the boys to be ripped up until the melon was found. The melon was found in the stomach of the fourteenth boy. There had been only fourteen.' The next two anecdotes are concerned with decapitation, the second concluding: 'He [the Sultan of Morocco] cut off the head of a beautiful young man standing beside him. Then he said to the artist [a Venetian painter], "Now, you can see that the marrow sticks out farther than the bone, and the bone than the flesh, and the flesh than the skin—as the head gets cold."' Evidently the born teacher was also an extremely idiosyncratic one. One is reminded that as a young reporter in America Hearn had inserted a finger into a boiled human brain in order to discover its consistency.

Professor Kajitani now began to speak about Hearn's Japanese colleague and friend, Nishida, and of the still unpublished diary which Nishida had kept and which had come into the Professor's hands. It was Nishida who had acted as go-between in Hearn's marriage to Setsuko Koizumi, the only daughter of an impoverished *samurai* family, and he was one of the few people whose devotion Hearn did not eventually repay with indifference or acrimony. He is often spoken of as 'The Saint of Matsue' and one of the two professors, I cannot now remember which, said of him, "He was a rare man,

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rare. Such men do not often exist." But in Japan I have met many such men: with their tenacity of will surmounting their physical frailties; with their intense sense of duty and obligation; with their affection, which can never express itself except in action, their taciturnity, their protective, even jealous loyalty. Nishida had all these qualities, which Hearn so conspicuously lacked, and the irony is that in their relationship he should always have regarded himself as the inferior and that Hearn should have patronised him. Perhaps the most touching picture of Nishida is contained in the letter which Hearn wrote to him after they had spent a holiday together near Matsue, never again to meet. In spite of the intense summer heat Nishida, already stricken with the tuberculosis which was so soon to kill him, insisted on staying on the wharf until the boat in which the Hearn were travelling to Kobe had disappeared from sight:

'... I felt unhappy,' Hearn wrote to him, 'at the Ohashi, because you waited so long, and I had no power to coax you to go home. I can still see you sitting there so kindly and so patiently—in the great heat of that afternoon. Write soon—if only a line in Japanese—to tell us how you are. Kaji-chan [Hearn's eldest son] remembers you, and sends his little greeting to Nishida-san no Oji-san. We all hope to have another summer with you next year.

' Ever faithfully, with warmest regards of all,

' Lafcadio Hearn.

' I still see you sitting at the wharf to watch us go. I think I shall always see you there.'

There was never to be another summer with Nishida; he died the next year, his last words being of Hearn: "Mother, have you heard from my friend? Is his son well?" It was a perfectly sustained friendship, and Hearn for once was aware of his debt. 'Imagine,' he wrote in a letter, 'beings who never, in their lives, did anything which was not—I will not say "right," that is commonplace—any single thing which was not *beautiful*! Should I write this, the world would, of course, call me a liar, as it has become accustomed to do. But I could not now even write of them except to you—the wounds are raw.

' I am thinking about the Velvet Souls in general, and all ever known by me in particular. Almost in every place where I lived long, it was

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given me to meet a velvet soul or two—presences (male or female mattered nothing) which with a word or look wrapped all your being round in a softness and warmth of emotional caress inexpressible. "Velvet" isn't a good word. The effect is more like the bath of tropical light and warmth to the body of a sick voyager from lands of consumption and rheumatism. . . . I have found such souls also in Japan—but only Japanese souls. But they are melting into the night.'

But perhaps he too, like so many other Europeans in their friendships with Japanese, from time to time felt that though so much was given by Nishida, yet something infinitesimal but all-important was also withheld: the pinch of salt without which the relationship lost its savour. 'About the men—one never gets very close to them,' he wrote to Chamberlain. 'One's best friends have a certain far-offness about them even when breaking their necks to please you. There is no such thing as clapping a fellow on the back and saying, "Hello! old boy!" There is no such thing as slapping a fellow on the knee, or chucking a fellow under the ribs. All such familiarities are terribly vulgar in Japan. So each one has to tickle his own soul and clap it on the back, and say "Hello" to it.'

"How was it," I asked Professor Kajitani as we left the site of the school, "that Setsuko Koizumi, the daughter of a *samurai* family, was ever permitted by her parents to marry Hearn?" I was recalling that only recently, when one of my English friends had married a Japanese girl, all the opposition to the match had come not from his family but from hers.

"Well, in Matsue Hearn was an important man even then. And though the Koizumi were *samurai*, they had lost everything in the Meiji revolution. Setsuko was twenty-two and at that time a girl of twenty-two had passed the age when she ought to be married. Hearn was paid as much as the Governor—to them he was a rich man, a man who could support them all. And he did too! In Kumamoto he supported ten of them, think of that, Mr. King."

From the school we went to the house where Hearn had lived after his marriage. 'My new house,' he wrote, 'is a *katchin-yashiki*, the ancient residence of some *samurai* of high rank. It is shut off from the street, or rather roadway, skirting the castle moat by a long, high wall coped with tiles. One ascends to the gateway, which is almost as

large as that of a temple-court, by a low broad flight of stone steps ; and projecting from the wall, to the right of the gate, is a look-out window, heavily barred, like a big wooden cage. . . . Like all *samurai* houses, the residence itself is but one storey high, but there are fourteen rooms within, and these are lofty, spacious, and beautiful.' Any foreigner, unused to the scale of Japanese houses, might expect from this description a residence far more grandiose than the modest villa which he will, in fact, find—just as he will be surprised to discover that the Katsura Detached Palace in Kyoto is the size of a small English country-house. But the proportions of the rooms are exquisite, the *shoji* sliding back from them to reveal a garden, which, I was told, has not changed since Hearn looked out on it. In the passage I have just quoted above, Hearn is at pains to make it clear that his is a *samurai* house, just as, when he writes about Setsuko Koizumi, he is always at pains to make it clear that his is a *samurai* wife. So, too, he would insist on his supposedly gypsy ancestry, boasting of his 'Romany thumb-print' and claiming that Hearn was a gypsy name deriving from a root meaning 'to roam, stray, become an outlaw.' In such matters his snobbery was selective—snobbery usually is—and he took no pride either in the Hearn family connection with Dr. John Arbuthnot, Queen Anne's physician and the friend of Pope and Swift, or in the nobility of his Cassimati ancestry.

We were now shown the house by a remarkable old lady of seventy-seven, Mrs. Shobu Negishi, who was the daughter-in-law of Hearn's old landlord. Shobu is the name, Professor Kajitani explained, of a kind of iris which bears flowers of a rainbow-violet colour and is a charm against demons, and it seemed appropriate for this woman with her still beautiful face, her erect carriage and her strong, resonant voice, so unlike the tinkling voices of most female Japanese. She pointed out to us where Hearn sat to write, where he received his visitors, and where he would join his wife and her relations for meals. "No, don't come to the gate, please, it is too cold," we insisted when we took our leave. But with that extreme humility which in itself is a kind of pride among women of the older generation in Japan, she insisted on following us down the steps and bowing us out into the highway.

Next door to this house stands the Lafcadio Hearn Museum, or

Yakumo-Kinen-Kan, built in 1936 with money contributed by his Japanese admirers. The size of a modest public lavatory, it is, says a notice, 'modelled on the Goethe Museum in Weimar, with Greek additions.' The 'Greek additions' were presumably made as a complimentary reference to Hearn's maternal ancestry. "Is this *really* like the Goethe Museum?" Professor Mori asked. "Well, the Goethe Museum *is* a little bigger," I replied with what I hoped was tact. Professor Mori giggled. In our dealings with the Japanese, we Europeans tend to take their inexpressiveness and extreme politeness for naïveté. In fact, as this brief exchange revealed, they take away far more from us than we often imagine; and we, it might be added, get away with far less.

It is easy enough to smile at this architectural tribute from Hearn's Japanese readers; and many foreigners, myself included, have done so. But we might perhaps ask ourselves—is there a Joseph Conrad Museum in England? or a Thomas Mann Museum in America? The building contains Hearn manuscripts and books; articles of clothing, among them some yellowing woollen underwear, brought with him from the States; and other personal possessions. Of the underwear there are unfortunately no postcards on sale; but one can buy 'Insect Basket,' 'Trunk and Dumb-bell (Koizumi used with pleasure),' 'Teaching Stuff,' and 'Lost Articles of Koizumi. Spectacles (Koizumi used with pleasure).' The photographs interested me most, and especially the school-groups of young boys all, with the exception of that one octogenarian, now dead. Everyone stared so intently at the camera, except for Hearn whose head was always turned aside. At the age of sixteen he lost the sight of one eye during a game with some schoolfellows and the strain to which the other eye was subsequently put (he would use magnifying-glass and telescope, but seldom spectacles in spite of that 'Koizumi used with pleasure') caused it to become increasingly protuberant—'My cyclops eye,' he called it. He was acutely sensitive of what he imagined to be the ugliness of his blind eye and refused ever to be photographed full-face except on one miserable occasion. That was when Dr. George Gould, once his patron and admirer during his American days and then his vituperative biographer ('Concerning Lafcadio Hearn') dragged him off to a photographer in Philadelphia and nagged at him until, as a

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compromise, Hearn agreed to be photographed with his whole face revealed, provided that the eyes themselves were closed. One can visualise the scene: Gould blustering and overbearing in his obtuse self-esteem; the gnome-like Hearn squirming at having to oppose the wishes of the man whom at that period he so unaccountably revered; and the embarrassed photographer appearing and disappearing under his black cloth. Gould later wrote of this portrait, so painful in its look of abject humiliation, that it was 'expressive because non-expressive,' and 'truthful' because of its 'negations,' 'renunciation of outlook' and 'absolute incuriosity as to the future.' Gould was exceptional among Hearn's former friends in deserving all the hostility with which 'kindnesses' of this kind were finally repaid.

On the wall of the museum hangs a picture by one of Hearn's sons, Kiyoshi, now a well-known Japanese painter; he and Kazuo, the eldest of the family, both still survive. The other two children, a boy and a girl, are dead. It is said in Tokyo that Kazuo and Kiyoshi once quarrelled over the supposedly luxurious life which Setsuko Koizumi led after the death of Hearn, the older son rebuking her and the younger taking her part. Hearn's treatment of Kazuo, as recounted in the excellent biography of Hearn by Vera McWilliams, seems atrocious to any Western reader today; but many Victorian fathers were no less implacable to their offspring and many modern Japanese fathers continue to be so. It was not merely Hearn's nationality which had changed; Hearn himself had changed until he had entirely assumed the personality of Koizumi Yakumo, the Japanese head of a family burdened by the manifold responsibilities imposed on him and sustained by the manifold services which he in turn can impose. (Koizumi was his wife's maiden name, adopted when he changed his nationality; Yakumo means 'Eight Clouds'.) The Japanese have a saying that the four most terrible things in life are earthquake, lightning, fire and father. Indulged and pampered until adolescence, Japanese children are then abruptly forced to take their places in the family hierarchy, like greenhouse plants suddenly transplanted into an exposed corner of a garden in winter. Not surprisingly therefore Japan often seems to an outsider to be a country in which everyone is seeking for a lost father. A small kindness, a show of sympathy to

someone younger than yourself, and as though a sharp tap had been given to a faucet long unused, the devotion gushes out to overwhelm you. Hearn, though he could also be gentle and loving to his children, as Kazuo has recounted in his *Father and I*, seems nonetheless to have modelled his behaviour as far as possible on the Japanese norm. From the age of five Kazuo had to submit each day to English lessons from his father. He was not allowed to sit, but had to stand to attention, like a soldier, while Hearn shouted at him, shook him and even struck him when he made some mistake. Even on Sundays and holidays the torture continued. Yet, like many other Japanese sons in their later years, Kazuo eventually came to feel for his dead father what was almost a mystical attachment. In this, as in so much else, Hearn the observer had at last become the thing observed. Unfortunately we have no verb 'to Japanese' as the equivalent of 'to Americanise,' 'to Anglicise,' 'to gallicise.' Perhaps in the case of Hearn 'to japan' would be the most suitable: for just as, after japanning, the natural grain of a piece of wood is lost forever under a hard coat of lacquer so, after Hearn had been thoroughly 'japanned,' it became increasingly difficult to trace his original European characteristics under the carapace he had built about himself.

When we had been shown the photographs of Hearn, my travelling companion had exclaimed: "What an absolutely hideous little man!", and that evening I began to speculate whether Hearn's hideousness and his littleness might not have had much to do with his decision, after so many years of homelessness, to make Japan his home. He had always been acutely conscious of the inadequacy of both his looks and his size. But now he was in a country where the former did not matter—he was neither handsome nor ugly, merely foreign to the natives—and where the latter was the norm. In any case Japanese women care far less than Western women about a man's appearance, setting chief store on his social position, his ability to support a family, and his claims to intellectual or artistic eminence.

But there must, of course, have been other psychological factors involved in Hearn's decision to adopt a totally alien way of life, even to the extent of obliging his Tokyo colleagues and pupils, many of them used to the comfort of Western chairs, to squat on the floor beside him, of marrying a Japanese wife, of bringing up his children

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in the Japanese style, and of adopting Japanese nationality. All his life, until he came to Japan, Hearn had been oppressed by the feeling that he belonged nowhere. In Ireland, as a swarthy child with gold ear-rings in his ears, and later in England, he was always an exotic, a wop, a dago; but unable to speak his mother's language and having lost all touch with her, he could not feel that he was truly Greek. In France, where he was sent to school for a brief period, he was taunted with being an Englishman. In America he was one of innumerable, penniless immigrants—Poles, Germans, Russians, Czechs, Irish. But worse than the consciousness that he had no true nationality (in fact, he was a British subject until he became a Japanese one) was his consciousness, aggravated by his physical abnormality, that he was in some ineradicable way unlike others and set apart from them. Like so many other voluntary exiles, he found that this disturbing sense of alienation from his fellow-men was appeased by a wholly alien environment. Now he could console himself: Of course he was not like others—he was a Westerner, they were Japanese! The difference was merely the difference of pigmentation, of tradition, of upbringing; it was not that terrible other difference within the psyche itself.

Lastly there was the fascination which, all his life, darker skins exerted on him. It is not generally known that in 1875, at the age of twenty-five, Hearn went through a marriage ceremony with a mulatto, a former slave, called Althea or Mattie Foley (there is some doubt as to her baptismal first name). But the laws of the time against miscegenation made the union void, and she and Hearn separated within a few months. (O. W. Frost in his *Young Hearn* tells the story in interesting detail for the first time.) Of this match Henry Watkin, a middle-aged printer from England who befriended Hearn in his early years and whom Hearn used to call 'Dear Old Dad,' wrote as follows: 'His unfortunate marriage was the result, not of "contempt for existing notions" . . . but from a desire that is native to all humanity, that of being loved. His sensitiveness of his personal defects was so deep, and the feeling that owing to them all doors were closed to him so great, that it seemed to him that love of even one of earth's social outcasts was too great a boon to be cast aside.' But this, one surmises, is not the whole diagnosis. Throughout his life, in New

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Orleans, in Martinique and then in Japan, he was to feel the pull of that attraction, like some dangerously hidden current. What was its power over him? May it not have been that whenever he embarked on another such liaison, he was unconsciously taking on himself the role of his father, seducing an illiterate girl from an alien and 'lesser' race; but taking it on himself each time with the intention that he would succeed where his father had so brutally and shamefully failed? Hearn, too, failed at first; but apart from the success of his literary work, the only other unqualified success in his life was his marriage to Setsuko Koizumi. He had managed to carry through what his father could not carry through, and so at last he had been able simultaneously to prove his superiority to his father and to expiate vicariously the wrong done to his mother.

Hearn had never been happier than at Matsué; and he was never to be so happy again. Driven to abandon his Earthly Paradise because of his fear of the winters beside the Japan Sea—'I fear a few more winters of this kind will put me underground,' he wrote to Basil Hall Chamberlain—he took up a post in Kyushu, the southern island of Japan, at the University of Kumamoto. He found the town 'devilishly ugly and commonplace'; there was no colleague like Nishida in whom he could inspire the same devoted respect; he hated the curriculum, he hated the evidence all round him of the New Japan, so much more insistent here than in old-fashioned, remote Matsué, and he hated above all, the earthquakes—he had, he confessed 'a really disgusting fear of them.' So the wanderer moved on: at first to Kobe, most Western of all cities in Japan except for the capital, where he worked for the *English-Language Chronicle*, and then to the Imperial University in Tokyo. Year by year his complaints multiplied and his persecution mania, always latent, became more acute. One by one he repelled those who had been generous and helpful to him, often using as his pretext some imagined slight or injury of which the astonished former friend was wholly unaware. To his half-sister in England, with whom he had started an affectionate correspondence, he suddenly sent only the empty envelope which had contained the last letter she had written to him; Basil Hall Chamberlain, with Nishida the chief architect of Hearn's happiness in Japan, had also been disinherited; to Fenellosa, the great Spanish-American

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scholar, he wrote a letter beginning: 'My Dear Professor—I have been meditating, and after the meditation I came to the conclusion not to visit your charming new home again—not at least before 1900. I suppose that I am a beast and an ape; but I nevertheless hope to make you understand. . . .' Chamberlain, kindest of friends, bore him no resentment, and even went to pains after Hearn's death to make excuses for his behaviour: 'Lafcadio's dropping of his friends seemed to me to have its roots in that very quality which made the chief charm of his works. I mean his idealism. Friends, when he first made them, were for him more than mere mortal men, they stood endowed with every perfection. . . . But he was not emotional merely; another side of his mind had the keen insight of a man of science. Thus he soon came to see that his idols had clay feet, and—being so purely subjective in his judgements—he was indignant with them for having, as he thought, deceived him. Add to this that the rigid character of his philosophical opinions made him perforce despise, as intellectual weaklings, all those who did not share them, or shared them only in a lukewarm manner—and his disillusionment with a series of friends in whom he had once thought to find intellectual sympathy is seen to have been inevitable. . . . Thus it was hardly possible for him to retain old ties of friendship except with a few men whom he met on the plane of everyday life apart from the higher intellectual interests. Lafcadio himself was a greater sufferer from all this than anyone else; for he possessed the affectionate disposition of a child, and suffered poignantly when sympathy was withdrawn or—what amounted to the same—when he himself withdrew it. He was much to be pitied—always wishing to love, and discovering each time that his love had been misplaced.' Hearn was less indulgent to himself and more perceptive. He saw that the sense of opposition from others, the feeling that he had a grievance, the rankling of some imagined injustice or betrayal were goads essential to the full functioning of his creative talent. ' . . . Unless somebody does or says something horribly mean to me, I can't do certain kinds of work—the tiresome kinds, that compel a great deal of thinking. . . . Pain is therefore to me of exceeding value betimes; and everybody who does me a wrong indirectly does me a right. . . . Whenever I begin to forget one burn, new caustic from some unexpected quarter

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is poured into my brain ; then the new pain forces other work. It strikes me as being possibly a peculiar morbid condition.' 'Possibly a peculiar morbid condition': as one reads the dismal story of Hearn's last years, his slow physical disintegration seems to be accompanied by a mental and spiritual disintegration equally distressing.

Typical of his worsening mania was the incident which brought to a close his work as lecturer at the Imperial University. An Englishman arrived in Hearn's lecture-room, introduced himself and announced that he would like to stay to hear him conduct his class. The intrusion was perhaps ill-mannered ; but Hearn's frenzy was out of all proportion to the mildness of this offence. Going home, he at once dashed off a letter of resignation in terms so violent that the President had no course but to accept it.

The astonishing fact is that through all these calamities he should have been able to produce book after book to make up a corpus of work on Japan unrivalled even today by any other Western writer. His last book, *Japan : An Attempt at an Interpretation*, completed when he was already in chronic pain from the heart condition which was so soon to kill him, is in many ways even better than his two-volume *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*—vigorous, wonderfully perceptive, the style clean and spare. The force which made it possible for his creative gift to continue to function despite the innumerable vexations of life in the capital, his disgust with the New Japan and his disillusion with his former friends, derived from the vision which he managed to retain from his Matsué days of another life, illusory perhaps and existing only in his imagination, yet able to cast its glow over everything that followed. Japan was certainly no longer as he had embraced it in Matsué ; perhaps it had never been like that. But in the years of misery to come the waters of the lake around which Matsué huddles, described by him so often in their changing effects of cloud, snow, storm and sunset, became, as it were, the reservoir from which he drew the creative energy to drag himself on in his appointed task 'to learn the people seriously,' 'to make at least this country my own.'

As we waved goodbye to our two gentle, kindly professors and then looked back on the beautiful little town, shrouded, as Hearn put it, 'in the first ghostly love-colours of a morning steeped in mist soft

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as sleep itself,' it was easy to see why this had been the core of Hearn's Japanese experience. He had spent only a year at Matsué and that had been enough for him ; but for a week-end it was still an Earthly Paradise.

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SUNDAYS, Wetherby Lockermann seldom got to church. He was a vestryman and he took an occasional Sunday School class, reading and expounding Biblical texts—the Book of Daniel was one of his favourites because there was action in it and a good story and he liked talking about lions—but Sunday was the only day in the week he could really call his own; he was at the law office of Lockermann & Lewellyn five days a week and Saturdays there was usually a committee meeting or a get-together at the Malvern Hills Club. Sundays after breakfast and a session with the crisp bulky sections of the *Herald-Tribune*, Wetherby descended to the large cool basement where Slugger and he operated a complex toy railway, elaborated over the years, with several lines, automatic signal control, viaducts, tunnels, way stations, a whirring and tiny rumbling as the Limited, an exact replica of the latest diesel locomotive, got under way. There, Wetherby would pass a pleasant morning, while upstairs echoed the brisk footsteps of his wife, Peg.

Wetherby was forty-five and he had married Peg Morton after graduation from law school. Peg was a thin repressed girl, with the bones of a child, a cloud of black hair and intense blue eyes. They had bought a house in Malvern Hills, a community so exclusive and motorised that it did not have sidewalks but did possess private police, and Wetherby went into the family firm on Pine Street, a block from Wall Street, in downtown Manhattan. The Lockermans had two children, Abbott Lockermann III, known as Slugger, and Sally. Their combined income totalled around 30,000 dollars; and Wetherby was a member of the Princeton Club and the Downtown Association.

He had, indeed, only one substantial worry, but a baffling one. His wife was becoming a nervous case. He did not, could not, take any steps. Psychiatrists were, as he would say, 'out of his ken';

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nor did he go in for cruises or drastic changes of scenery. He shied away from any discussion, not believing in 'borrowing trouble.' But trouble was sometimes there, borrowed or not, and these outbursts of hysteria and denunciation which intensely upset him, and created violent disorder in life, made Wetherby feel as if he were hovering on the edge of darkness.

And the truly perplexing aspect was that he had no idea what was wrong.

A morning at the throttle was the best of Sunday. Afterward—all too soon!—sounded the knell of Sunday dinner. The Lockermann family would pile into the station wagon to traverse the winding way between Pinecroft, on Forest Drive, and the Morton house, a half-mile distant. Dinner with Peg's parents was a Sunday institution, a command performance. None of them, Wetherby reflected, really enjoyed the institution; sometimes he wondered if they did not hate it. For, generally, a quarrel would be simmering between Mom and Pop, quarrels which seemed to grow worse, more ugly in their implications, the finer the green Sunday without. Dissatisfaction brooded over the mahogany; and by all odds the Roosevelt years had been the worst. Hardly a Sunday went by without a tirade from Pop on 'that man'; though in this almost solitary instance Mom and Pop saw eye to eye and Wetherby—who had long out-grown his college pacifism, his 'visionary idealism'—had to bear the brunt.

Roosevelt's passing brought temporary relief and the advent of Eisenhower had even accomplished a reconciliation with the Government on the part of Malvern Hills; politically, the conversation was relaxed as long as Adlai Stevenson could be kept out.

But this was not always possible.

That Sunday in early Spring—Wetherby had begun to dread the dinner when he saw the kind of day it was—there was a skirmish over Castro and then Pop got down to 'the meat of the coconut'—as Representative Martin Dies used to say—the nuclear bomb tests.

"The Reds are going ahead. And we're standing by. Getting behind! Who's back of it? I'll tell you. It's that fellow Stevenson. He was yapping about the tests back in 1956."

Pop seldom shouted. Instead, he talked in a soft voice, with a curl to it, which was much more provocative. Now he looked down the

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table at Wetherby from behind a massive silver tureen that Jackson, the coloured houseman, had just brought in.

"Well, Pop, of course you know I never was—there's something to be said on both sides," Wetherby replied, somewhat incoherently.

"Getting behind!" Pop said softly and nastily, ladling asparagus soup. "That fellow Stevenson. No lawyer downtown thinks anything of Adlai Stevenson."

"But we have no evidence the Russians are testing."

"Evidence! What do you need? A visiting card to the Kremlin?"

Mrs. Morton was watching; a plump overstuffed woman with a protruding front tooth and the face of a querulous chipmunk. "Oh, it's all those silly ideas Wetherby was mixed up with in Princeton," she said. "All those I won't works and gimme gimme . . . Roosevelt," she pronounced, in a hushed, thunderous coda.

Wetherby intervened; he couldn't stand another Roosevelt Sunday. "We're talking about the nuclear tests, Mom. Nothing to do with Roosevelt."

"I know what you're talking about," she said. "You needn't think I don't."

Jackson sidled in with a huge platter of roast chicken. He had the beginning of a stagger.

"Drinking again," Pop said crisply, filling Slugger's plate with tender white meat. "Here, young fellow. Get some flesh on your bones. I don't know what they feed you over there on Forest Drive. Got to come to Grandpop to get a square meal."

Wetherby laughed, a short annoyed laugh. "Oh, he shovels it away all right, Pop."

"And Sally," Pop went on, "why you're just a rail, mopsie. Give me your plate!"

"They have a balanced diet," Wetherby said.

Pop uttered a curious sound, between a snort and a cough, as he prowled for pieces of succulent breast. Jackson came in with a gravy boat, the stagger more pronounced . . . "Brought back intoxicated the other night," Pop said. "They don't appreciate a good home." He waved a carving fork. "If it wasn't for Rachel, I'd let him go. Here you are, mopsie," he said to Sally. "Let me see that disappear." He turned to Wetherby, "How about a leg?"

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"Those drapes, Wetherby," Mom suddenly said. "I want to talk to you about those drapes."

Pop glanced up, fork in the air. "What drapes?"

"You keep out of this, Melrose," Mom said. "I'm talking to Peg and Wetherby. I've found just the thing—"

Wetherby began to pick at his chicken leg, the familiar tight knot in his stomach. This sudden assault by Mom, so characteristic when she couldn't get into the main conversation, disconcerted him.

"Of course, you're not serious about those awful yellow cretonnes for your living room. Why, they'll show the dirt a mile away."

"Oh, I don't know," he said, his mouth full of chicken. "They're—gay."

"Gay!" Mom shrieked. "Oh, Wetherby, you poor baby. You don't know what you're saying."

He was getting sore, really sore, and he felt his children gazing at him. Damn these dinners! Why must he go through this every Sunday?

"Now," Mom said, in a practical tone, "I've been to Reid's in New York, and found just the thing. A blue velour that'll last you ages. I've got a swatch here."

"Well, but Mom—"

"Oh, don't worry about the cost," she said. "I know it's more expensive than those yellow things. I'll pay the difference."

"It's not the cost, Mom," he replied. He was not feeling well. All this rich food; he had to watch that ulcer.

"You mean you really like those yellow things for your living room?"

"Marjorie, what on earth!" Pop said, gently and nastily. "Let him have what he wants. He's got to live with it."

"I told you to keep out, Melrose!" she cried. "You know nothing whatever about the subject. Why, if I'd depended on you, we'd be living in a Victorian museum. No taste at all. Never had!"

"Ah," he said, "I didn't do over the house. Lay out the garden. Put in the flower bed. Anybody can buy a few sticks of furniture! It takes imagination and intelligence to do over a house, Marjorie."

He spoke softly and with scorn. "And I sent Peg to Art School. Was that your idea, Marjorie?"

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"Well, it wasn't yours!" she snapped.

"Oh," he said, "wasn't it? Well, whose idea was it then?"

"It was mine," Peg said abruptly, eyes bright and staring.

"Not," Pop went on, "that it seems to have taken. I'm still waiting for my Florentine boy, in the garden. Or was it a faun, Peg?"

Peg put down her fork; a terrible weight seemed to press on her. "Florentine boy, faun," she spoke in a tense rapid voice. "Why, you don't know. Hours and hours of casting. Why—" And she broke off, darting a glance around. "Oh, what difference now?"

Silence engulfed them. Wetherby could see the garden, droning in the midday sun. A green quiet radiance on the trees, the grass and flowers. He had a fleeting sense of something missed, some tender and inexorable joy that ought to be there and was not.

Mom was staring at her husband, her face flushed, her eyes dancing with rage. "So I have no intelligence and no imagination? Was that what you were hinting in your sly, treacherous way?"

Pop rang for plates. The unfortunate Jackson had, apparently, been banished to the kitchen and Rachel, his wife, came in with a luscious brown betty and a great bowl of hard sauce. Wetherby's children's eyes glowed; but Wetherby's stomach was tight and numb.

"Answer me, Melrose!" Mom yelled. "Can't you hear me?"

"I should think there could be no trouble about that, Marjorie."

She clutched the table edge and pushed herself violently backward. "If you think I'm going to listen to your insults!"

"Brown betty, Marjorie?"

"Aa—aa—ah!" she cried; and pounded on the table, to Wetherby's astonishment. He had never seen her do that. Unperturbed, Pop passed her a heaping plate of brown betty and she began to eat with eager spoon. This astonished Wetherby even more; it was a nervous feat far beyond his own stomach.

The dinner staggered on. Everyone ate heartily except Wetherby, who had foundered with the roast chicken, and Peg, who had a bird-like approach to food. Pop and Slugger had two helpings of brown betty each; and Pop proposed cigars and brandy.

Wetherby said: "I'd like to, Pop, but I've got an early closing tomorrow. I've brought the papers home."

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Pop nodded. "We all have to work harder now that those people have taken over the country. Noses to the grindstone, in the old Yankee way. Why," he exclaimed, "this young upstart never met a payroll. He's never had to do a day's work in his life."

"Gimme, gimme," said Mom Morton, digesting.

"How do you want him to understand the business man's problems? It's starting again—the whole damn thing. I warn you."

"What, Pop? What's starting again?" Wetherby asked.

"The Roosevelt business!" Pop said grimly.

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On the drive home, Peg was ominously silent while the kids were rowdying in the back seat until Wetherby, his nerves raw, shouted: "All right! All right! that's enough—unless you want to go to bed when you get home."

But the silence was almost worse than the giggling and shoving because then he was aware of the thunderous female presence beside him, the unuttered threat to what remained of the day, and he wished that Slugger and he were down in the basement and it was morning and the Limited was just starting out on a crack run.

They had already turned into Forest Drive when Peg said: "Why were you so unpleasant to Mom?"

"Unpleasant? Why? How?" He was startled, thinking that he had always tried to lean over backwards with the Mortons.

"About the drapes."

"Why, I wasn't unpleasant," he protested. "I didn't know anything about those blue ones."

"It would have given Mom such pleasure. You might at least have been gracious."

"Oh, Peg, you know we agreed on the yellow cretonne."

"That's not the point," she replied brusquely.

What the hell is the point? he thought; and turned into his own driveway.

"You might have shown me some consideration if you don't care anything for Mom. You saw how upset she got, and her heart condition and all."

Heart condition, he thought. The meal she put away would take

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a horse to digest. Aloud he said: "Well, the dinner's over with. One more Sunday . . ."

Peg's face was white and tense as she got out of the car. She marched into the house, slamming the screen. Presently he heard her upstairs, opening and closing doors. What the devil, he wondered.

"How about a game of catch, dad?" Slugger suggested. The Little League season was due to open in a few weeks.

"Not just now, Slugger," Wetherby replied. Nervously he started upstairs, catching sight of his daughter twitching and grimacing. The Morton side . . . Peg was standing in the open doorway of an empty spare room, surrounded by cardboard boxes from Fifth Avenue shops. Lord & Taylor boxes, Best boxes, Peck & Peck boxes, Arnold Constable boxes, Finchley boxes, Rogers Peet boxes—Wetherby had been saving them for years.

"What's going on?" he demanded. "What's the idea?"

"I'm getting rid of these boxes," Peg replied.

His boxes? "What for? They're not doing any harm," he exclaimed, wondering what was going to happen next.

"It's messy," Peg said.

He was outraged. No one before had ever accused him of being messy. That was one thing he got from his mother. She too hoarded boxes. You never knew when a good box might come in handy. "It was not messy," he said, "until you started throwing them around."

"They are going out," Peg announced, reaching for a hefty Lord & Taylor item. She started downstairs.

"Here, give me that box!" Wetherby seized one end. Peg tugged, her eyes snapping; the eyes of Mom Morton. The spring sunlight made bright pools upon the hardwood floor. Peg tore away the box and rushed downstairs. Wetherby leaned against the open door, his breathing heavy, his stomach in knots. He heard the screen door slam and guessed that she had taken the box out to the garage. Methodically he set about stacking the boxes in neat piles according to size. There was even a tall pillar of hat boxes. He was determined to preserve the remainder of his hoard.

He heard Peg coming upstairs and took up a strategic position just inside the doorway of the spare room. "Now, Peg—"

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"Messy," she said. "A fire hazard, too." She tried to sidle around him, but he seized her bony shoulders.

"Peg, what's got into you?"

"Let me go!" She wrenched away. "Insulting mother. Spoiling our dinner. And filling the house with empty boxes. I won't have it!"

"Peg, are you completely nuts?" he shouted.

Her eyes were pale blue, very clear and fine; now they darkened, strange little lights flickered. He remembered that time the night of their engagement party at the Pierre, when Peg had thrown a full glass of ginger ale into the face of an old flame of his, as Wetherby and the girl (it was Sara Greene) were parting from a last fond embrace.

"And what if I were?" she said, very quietly. "What then? What would you do?"

The sunlight was still there, but now it had a yellow sheen, a blaze of hysteria. "Why, I don't know. I wonder," Wetherby replied.

"Oh, you wonder!" she cried mockingly. "You wonder!"

"But all this—" he said helplessly, sweat on his hands. "All this, Peg—"

"Would you divorce me?"

He shook his head. "For God's sake, Peg. How do I know?"

"Would you? Would you? Answer, you coward!"

Stung, he retorted: "All right, damn it, I would!"

"Oh—oh," she backed away, hands over her eyes. He could hear her sobbing in the yellow silence. And now she was going blindly downstairs, one hand over her eyes, like a hurt little girl. Damn, he thought. All over these boxes.

But as he followed Peg downstairs he knew it wasn't the boxes. Or the drapes. He had got himself into a fine pickle by not telling her that his own mother—that impeccable woman—had selected the yellow cretonne; and then when Mom Morton had come out with the blue velour, it was too late. A damned silly business.

But why hadn't he told Peg?

He was always Sunny Jim, yes, that was the man in pigtail and red flaring coat on boxes of Force, his favourite breakfast food as a child, and that's what his mother called him. Sunny Jim. And for a moment he thought of his mother: her dark eyes and pince-nez, her

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calm imposing presence—in her youth she had been a school-teacher—and none of this emotional frenzy of the Mortons. He wasn't built for that. The boxes themselves weren't important. It was what they meant in his life : order, saving, the fact that everything he had ever owned, that had ever touched his life, had its own significance. Even the boxes his clothes and hats came in ; and the clothes and hats of his wife and children.

Downstairs, Peg was nowhere in sight. For a moment he had a clutch of fear, imagining her rushing hysterically down the road and neighbours peering out. But he calmed down, knowing her bitter pride. He heard a noise in the basement and went down.

Peg was standing in the midst of the railway, gazing around. She seemed, Wetherby noted with relief, to have a grip on herself. "What are you doing, Peg?"

"Looking at the trains," she said. "What a lot you've done."

"Yes," he nodded, pleased. "It's a pretty good old railway we've got. I haven't seen a better anywhere."

"You know," she said, "I used to have my workroom here, my clay and modelling things. When we were first married."

It was true, but that was so long ago he had forgotten. "So you did," he replied. "We ought to fix up another place for you."

She looked at him, old pain and anger in her eyes. "Yes," she said, "when there's time."

"When there's time!" he agreed heartily. "I was just thinking the other day, when is Peg going to do another dog for me."

She was silent ; then said : "You meant that, didn't you ? About divorcing me?"

"Oh, Peg ! Let's not start again."

"Ah, but you did," she said. "I felt you did."

He dreaded such moments. Why not bury the business ? "All silly," he said.

Slowly she shook her head. "No," she said. Then : "Ah, but you've got everything, Wetherby. Always did. I always knew. Never let a person go."

"Why, you just said——" he protested. "All this about divorce, what do you mean?"

"Can't be myself," she said. "But you would—you would do it."

The Toy Railway

"Don't understand," Wetherby said. "You're not making sense."

"No—not to you. You've got the basement and the spare room and all the other rooms. Every corner. Where could I do a dog? In the kitchen?"

"Now, sweetie pie!" he shouted, with bluff heartiness. "Just say the word and we'll fix up something." He glanced around at the trestles of intricate track. "Of course, we're pretty well set up down here."

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of it," she said. "It's a splendid railway." She hesitated, looking at him. She seemed about to speak, but turned abruptly and started upstairs. "I've got some things to do," she said; and he saw her thin wiry legs rapidly ascending.

Wetherby sighed and lit a cigarette. He smoked and contemplated the railway. It was cool and peaceful in the basement and his stomach was coming unknotted. He knew Peg well enough to realise that the crisis or whatever it had been was over. He was glad anyway he had saved the boxes. You never knew when a box might come in handy. . . .

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At the doorway of the spare room, Peg stood looking at the boxes, all in neat piles according to size. It was not messy; it was anything but messy. There was a vast meticulous order, which seemed forever to defy her. And yet: here, in this corner, she would have put her models; here, by the window, set up her work table; here, along the wall, a bench with drawers . . . the light was good, the space more than adequate.

Her workshop . . . and that mad moment of the boxes came back to her, tugging frenziedly in the yellow afternoon; a struggle to recapture herself, Peg Morton. And with the foundered Sunday, suddenly she felt lost and frantic, struck her temple with a small clenched fist. She was inside those boxes, she was suffocating, calling out for help, she was boxed and wrapped in tissue paper and all the box covers were closed tight.

The Road Burners

BY RICHARD LUCAS

EDDIE turned the heavy, red and black truck off the road and up onto the hard dry verge. Behind him, the four trailers—the water tanker, and the surface-burner on its trolley, the caravan and the pitch-truck—banged their way across the scorched grass and came to a halt.

"Look at it," said Eddie, pointing ahead.

Beside him Sam Trickett screwed up his eyes and looked to where the new by-pass shimmered away into the bouncing heat.

"How does anyone expect us to work in this temperature?"

Sam, tired of Eddie's outcries, did not answer. Instead, he got down from the cabin and stood in the shade of the truck lighting a cigarette. He was a tall, fair-haired young man with firm blue eyes that were continually searching the objects around him as though he had lost something. When he looked up from the cigarette, he noticed for the first time the rows of new houses that flanked the by-pass. Square, clean, modern buildings—each with its own portion of garden individually nursed behind the dividing wire fence. In one of the gardens a girl in a white summer frock and sandals was hanging out a line of washing. Sam watched her with an empty fascination.

Behind him, he heard Benjo climbing down from the caravan. Benjo—the oldest of the three and the owner of the outfit—was small and grey-haired, his face darkened by the fierce heat from the burner. The flesh around his eyes was brown and swollen and the pupils floated loosely behind a protecting layer of jelly. As he walked into the sunlight, his eyes began to water again and rubbing away the tears with the back of his hand, he joined Eddie and Sam in the shade of the truck. They stood there for several minutes, the two younger men smoking while Benjo swigged warm water from a bottle that was kept in the cabin.

The Road Burners

Sam still watched the girl in the garden. He thought she was about his age, perhaps a year or two younger—it was difficult to tell at that distance. He saw her look across at them, her eyes moving quickly over the truck, the caravan and the three men. Then she turned and went into the house.

"It's hot," said Eddie, and spat.

"It'll get hotter," murmured Benjo.

"What about unloading?" asked Eddie.

"We'll do that tonight—when it's cooler."

He smacked the cork back into the water bottle and tossed it up into the cabin.

"Meanwhile, I'm kipping. It's stifling out here."

The two younger men followed him back to the caravan. Inside it was dark but much cooler and they lay on their bunks, listening to the traffic on the by-pass. They had had a long drive that day—without even a stop for lunch—and all of them were tired. But it had been worth the journey, they saw that now—although none of them said so. Sam had already estimated that the by-pass was four miles long. That meant sixteen miles of single track to be re-surfaced—nearly two months' work. It was not often they could settle in one place for so long.

Sam reached up and touched the corrugated iron roof of the caravan with the flat of his hand. It was blisteringly hot and he was aware suddenly of the oppressiveness of the wheeled hut. He went out into the sunlight again and started walking.

He had joined Benjo three years before, when he left school. His parents had been against the idea at first but employment in the Midlands was at a low ebb and finally they had had to let him go. According to Sam's father, Benjo had started the business with a brother who was later killed in the war. It was then that Benjo had taken Eddie on.

Eddie had been a mechanic in the Army. He was thick and strong, occasionally wild and often drunk, quick then to knock aside anybody that got in his way. Nothing disturbed him except working in the cold, and then he sniffed and simpered like an unhappy child. Later there were rumours about Eddie. Some said he had had a lot of trouble with his own wife, others hinted at an affair with somebody

else's. All of them suggested that he was on the run from the opposite sex.

It was Eddie that Sam's father had been worried about. He could have been a bad influence. But Benjo, quiet and unemotional, intent on making a living, had brought Sam and Eddie together, quietly smoothing over the difficulties, working them into a team.

Looking back from the end of the by-pass, Sam could see how the road sliced through flat open fields, running wide of the new council estate, to join the coastal road to the south. He thought the by-pass the finest he had ever seen. It was long and sleek—almost handsome in the strong afternoon light—crossed by the two arched bridges which carried the roads in from the hills on the north side of town. The hills too looked very fine, marked with the strong green foliage of hornbeam and beech and the earthy brownness of dead bracken.

Sam turned back towards the black-and-red truck and its trailers, so incongruous at the other end of the by-pass. He had offered to re-paint the outfit the year before but Benjo had said no, he liked the colours. They were distinctive and from a distance they always looked clean. Blue or yellow could never be the same. Sam had not tried to argue.

He walked back, the heat bouncing ahead of him along the unshaded road, and when he reached the trailers again he was sweating slightly. He pulled off his shirt, opened the cock on the bowser and washed his face and chest in the warm clinging water, drying himself afterwards on a piece of cotton-waste from the cabin.

As he stood buttoning up his shirt he saw that the girl was watching him again from the garden. It embarrassed him and in his haste he tore off a button. He looked up at the girl.

"Would you like some fresh water for your tea?" she called.

Sam was about to point out that the bowser behind him held nearly a thousand gallons of fresh water, when he thought better of it. Instead he crossed to the wire fence, still holding the shirt button in his hand, and tried to speak to the girl. But the words jammed in his throat.

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She smiled with a shy flutter of her eye-lashes, and then one eye fluttered again nervously as though she was winking at him.

"I'll sew it on for you, if you'll just climb over," she said.

He did so, and with his heart thumping loudly, followed her into the house. She led him into the kitchen, put on a kettle and then sat in front of him to sew the button onto his shirt.

Without looking up, she asked him his name.

"Sam," he replied. "We're going to re-surface the by-pass."

"Be here a while then, Sam?" she asked.

"Two months."

He was going to tell her about Eddie and Benjo but suddenly he felt her fingers against his bare chest as she reached inside his shirt to return the needle, and he shivered.

"Not cold, are you?" she asked.

"No. Expect it was just coming in here out of the sun."

"Possible," said the girl, and then a moment later expertly snapped away the cotton with her teeth and buttoned up his shirt.

"Thanks," said Sam, and smiled nervously.

She persuaded him to stay for tea and they sat in the lounge and talked until the sun had set. She questioned Sam closely about his work, and his home and family. But by the end of the evening the only things he knew about her were her name, Lucy, and the fact that she lived with her father. It was almost dark before he remembered that the trucks had still to be unloaded. There had been no signs of Eddie or Benjo all evening, but he knew they would be out soon. He said good-night to Lucy and slipped out of the house and over the fence, and was already unroping the surface-burner when Eddie and Benjo joined him.

They worked in silence, sweating in the warm darkness, until the unloading was finished and the scattered equipment had been marked out with red warning lights. Sam leaned against the bowser then and smoked one last cigarette. A few stars had appeared above the town and an owl hooted its way across the nearest field. The by-pass was almost deserted.

He watched a light go out in an upstairs window of the girl's house and thought he saw the curtains pulled aside for a moment afterwards. But he could not be sure in the darkness.

Richard Lucas

He stubbed out the cigarette, turned towards the caravan and saw then that Eddie had been watching him from the door.

The following morning, eight men from the local council drove out to help with the work. The fire on the pitch-truck was lit and great blocks of asphalt thrown in to melt. Then the surface-burner was moved out into the roadway and black smoke belched into the sky as the jets were fired. Sam drove the truck, pulling the burner across the worn surface of the by-pass a few inches at a time. Benjo followed on behind, his eyes streaming, his face fiercely hot.

Eddie directed the council men. Two of them, using old watering-cans, sprayed the hot liquid pitch over the road, while two others brushed it out evenly. The rest of the men worked hard to get down the lorry-loads of warm sticky Macadam tar before it cooled and hardened, and in the afternoon a small roller trundled out and began flattening down the carefully-raked-over black lumps.

By the end of the day they had progressed a few hundred yards. The council men went to their homes in the town, while Eddie, Benjo and Sam returned to the caravan and lay on their bunks to rest. After a while Eddie pulled himself over onto one elbow and looked across at Sam.

"You seeing that girl again?" he asked abruptly.

Sam stared fixedly at the rippled iron roof. So they had seen him after all. He had thought a lot about Lucy during the day but the idea that he should take the initiative in seeing her again had not occurred to him.

"What if I am?" he heard himself ask.

"Be careful with them bitches," said Eddie. "Most of 'em are as slippery as eels. They'll go with any man."

He lay back in his bunk again and wiped the sweat from his face with both hands.

"I remember one woman I knew. She——"

"Let's keep your women out of this," said Benjo quietly. "The boy's free to do as he likes."

Eddie sat up again angrily.

"She'll ruin him." He looked across at Sam. "Mark my words, boy, you'll suffer. They're all the same."

The Road Burners

"I can look after myself," said Sam, and the conversation ended as abruptly as it had begun.

Some time later Benjo sat up and pulled on his shirt and an old jacket.

"I got friends on the other side of town," he said, looking at Eddie. "We could get a bath."

Sam held his breath, waiting for Eddie's refusal. But to his surprise Eddie said he'd go and within a few minutes the boy was alone in the caravan. He lay thinking about Lucy for a while and then got up put on a clean shirt and went round to her house. When she answered the door she did not seem surprised to see him. Later she told him she'd been watching him all day from behind the lounge curtains. She hadn't gone out into the garden because of being seen by the other men; she didn't want to cause Sam any trouble. She smiled and again one eye winked sleepily at him.

"How's work going?" she asked when they were in the lounge.

"All right," said Sam. "First day's always the worst."

As she poured tea into little yellow cups with wide gold rims, she asked about Eddie.

"He looks so—tough," she said. "Like he's angry all the time."

Sam tried to explain, between mouthfuls of hot tea, that Eddie was all right as long as nobody crossed him.

"And if they do?" asked Lucy.

"Like as not, he'd try and kill them," said Sam, and then laughed.

"No, he's all right really. Benjo can handle him."

Sam did not know whether it was the tea or the heavy heat of the room but he was soon prickling with sweat and he suggested they went for a walk. Lucy agreed and when they had stacked away the tea things, she led him out of the house, and through the council estate to the open fields at the back. A mile away, in the strong evening sunlight, the hills looked even more handsome than the day before.

Suddenly the girl took Sam's hand and started running. He stumbled after her, caught up and ran beside her through the long grass until they reached the far side of the field. There they stopped under a thick hawthorn tree and watched each other laughing and panting

for breath. Sam was about to speak when Lucy took his hand again and lead him on towards the hills. They crossed two more fields and then the ground began to slope upwards and they climbed on through bracken and brambles and over fallen tree-trunks until they reached a high bank of green moss and tufted grass.

The ground was dry and warm and they lay down, the sun on their faces, and looked at the sky.

Sam turned his head to one side and watched the gentle rise and fall of Lucy's body, her dress tightening and loosening over her breasts and waist. Her dress dipped a little at the front and the skin below her neck and shoulders looked soft and creamy. Above her head was a patch of tiny wild strawberries and Sam rolled over and picked a few. Then, leaning across her body, he dropped them one by one into her mouth. Her lips moistened with the sugary juice and when she opened her eyes and looked at him he moved forward to kiss her.

But suddenly she was no longer there. She ducked quickly away from under him and when he looked up, she was running back down the hill towards the open fields. He felt angry for having frightened her, but as he stood up he saw that she had stopped running and was standing, her hands on her hips and her feet astride, looking back at him. She was grinning cheekily and when he caught up with her she kissed him fully on the mouth and then without a word led him back towards the house.

It was already August before one carriage-way of the by-pass was completed. The weather had been hot and dry and the men were finding the work difficult and tiring. Benjo's face was wrinkled to an almost black dryness, and his eyes were bloodshot and smoky. Eddie, like most of the council men, had been working without a shirt and his thick body was tanned like a tough leather hide. He had grown even more surly over the past few weeks, swearing continually at the council men, occasionally spitting fiercely into the fire-box beneath the pitch-truck and all the time watching Sam at the wheel of the truck.

Sam knew he was watching him and kept out of harm's way. He supposed it was because of Lucy but had no idea what it was

The Road Burners

about her that made Eddie so jealous. Perhaps there had been some truth in those rumours after all.

Sam was seeing Lucy every evening now. Occasionally they went to the cinema, but more often they walked to the hills and lay together in the last warm rays of the sun. In all that time she never spoke about her father and Sam never saw him. He had no idea how Lucy felt but the thought of losing her was beginning to worry him.

Lucy, however, had no worries. She let Sam hold her and kiss her with an emptiness that never troubled her. She liked him—if only because he was firm when he kissed her and the tang of tar on his clothes made him smell like a man—but he was not the first man who had touched her and failed to rouse her.

By September the outfit had returned to the other end of the by-pass and the caravan and trailers were once again parked outside Lucy's house. It had been another month of clear dry days, the sun cooler now but still warm enough to keep the men stripped to the waist as they worked. Only at lunch-time did they slip on a shirt or vest and walk to the little white-fronted public house that stood back in a small copse beyond the round-about.

Eddie would sit in the cool of the public bar, surrounded by the admiring council men, telling stories of the desert war and the long slow fight back through Italy. Time and again they heard of the night he pitched his tent in a small back garden and was rudely awakened by a local peasant at three in the morning to learn that he had been sleeping on his wife's grave.

It was a crude story but the council men had learned better than not to laugh, and when they came out of the pub an hour later with Eddie staggering between them, they were glad the job was nearly over.

Sam and Benjo spent their lunch hour on the roadside, eating and resting in what little shade they could find. Sam had not seen Lucy that week. She had gone to her mother's for a few days. He wondered later why her mother lived away from her husband and daughter, and he found himself watching the house in case Lucy returned unexpectedly. It was not long, however, before he realised that Lucy had not even gone away. Twice he saw her moving

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about the house, and on a third occasion he saw a man at her bedroom window—a man too young to be her father. He could not understand why she had lied to him but he put off going to see her.

Only the roundabout itself remained to be surfaced, and they worked hard to finish it by the end of the week. The council men were needed for other work and Benjo wanted to get back to the Midlands while the weather was still fine. There was a job going near Leicester, but it had to be started soon otherwise there would be no chance of finishing it before the winter. He was also worried about Eddie. He had put up with it for fifteen years because he had never met another man so capable at his job, but Eddie's face was now showing a suppressed unhappy anger which even Benjo found difficult to tolerate.

The following morning Sam drove the surface-burner back to the caravan, and sat in the warm cabin, smoking a cigarette and watching Lucy's house. He remembered the way she had asked him into the house and the ease with which she had taken his hand when they went to the hills and later allowed him to make love to her. It had bewildered him then and it angered him now. Eddie had been right—she was no good. He stubbed out the cigarette, jumped down from the cabin and walked quickly back to the roundabout, kicking at the dry tufts of grass along the verge as he went.

A new lorry load of Macadam—the last—was being unloaded by the council men. Eddie was standing over them, hurrying them to empty the tip of the warm, smoking, black mixture.

After a while he crossed to the pitch-truck where Sam and Benjo were standing.

"Think we'll finish it?" he asked Benjo sharply.

"Easily. Provided everybody stays on their feet," said Benjo, looking beyond Eddie towards the bright little pub. Eddie stared angrily into Benjo's swollen eyes and then turned and went back to the lorry. He called something to the council men and they downed tools and followed him into the pub.

Benjo watched them disappear and then shook his head sadly.

"Might as well get some of this pitch down," he said to Sam. "Give us a chance to get ahead of them."

Sam nodded, filled one of the old watering-cans with pitch and

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began pouring it over the road. The thin liquid smoked and splashed around him and its tangy fumes violated the clear September air.

Behind him Benjo swept the pitch evenly across the road with an old stiff broom. They worked on in silence, sweating slightly, both of them aware of the waves of laughter drifting lazily from the white-walled pub.

Eddie was standing in the middle of the low-ceilinged bar, swaying slightly when Lucy came in. He had a pint of beer in his right hand, another in his left and there was a third on the table in front of him.

"Thirty seconds," he said thickly. "Thirty seconds. Where's that bloody time-keeper?"

He turned to look for the man and saw instead Lucy still standing in the doorway. He looked at her for a long moment, then grunted and turned back to the other men.

"The time-keeper," he roared. "I'm getting thirsty."

One of the men stepped forward, a large time-piece in his hand. Lucy went to the bar, bought a bottle of gin and then slipped quickly away. Outside she heard the man with the watch shout "Go!" and then there was silence. She walked back to the house, keeping on the far side of the by-pass, out of Sam's sight. Before she reached the house there was a sudden roar from the pub and somebody shouted "Twenty-eight."

Out on the roundabout Sam lifted his head and looked at Benjo, but the old man took no notice and they both went on working.

Eddie, his lips wet and loose, staggered to the front door of the pub and looked out into the sunlight.

"Where's that girl?" he asked.

"Gone," said one of the men.

"Anyway, she's no good to you," said another. "She's married."

"None of 'em are good for you," said Eddie, turning back to the bar. "Whose round is it?"

A small red-faced man, who walked as though somebody had cut off his legs at the knees, called for another nine pints.

When they returned to work, Eddie was drunk. He stood outside

Richard Lucas

the pub for a long time, trying to focus his eyes against the strong light, then he lurched across the dry grass to where Sam was standing on the pitch-truck stirring the cauldron with a steel rod. Eddie stood below him, his mouth gaping like a fish, his hands groping feebly at his sides. Sam looked down and wondered what he was going to say. He had been expecting something for so long that he was not sure now what his own reactions were going to be.

"I told you," said Eddie. "I told you she'd get you. She's married. You didn't know that, did you? You didn't know she was married. The whore."

Sam did not move. He was not as angry as he thought he was going to be. If Lucy was married, that was her problem. Besides, it made things easier in the long run. There was no reason for seeing her again now.

Eddie's eyes wandered loosely over Sam's body, his lips were moist with spittle and his beer-stained shirt had stuck to his sweating body.

Suddenly Sam hated him and knew that he had hated him for many months. He started to get down from the pitch-truck, anxious to get out of Eddie's way.

"Where you going, kid?" he asked. "To beat up her old man? He's a sailor, y'know. She's made a fool of you."

"Shut-up!" said Sam.

"Don't you tell me to shut-up, you namby-pamby bastard. I'll—"

Sam felt his heart turn over in anger. He wanted to hit Eddie, smash his fist into that wet, flapping mouth, break his teeth, hurt him and perhaps even see him cry. But he knew he was incapable of knocking the man down and suddenly in angry frustration he swung the steel rod blindly at Eddie's head. It missed by several inches but the boiling hot pitch splattered across his face, burning into his skin.

Eddie screamed and fell back onto the grass, one hand trying to wipe away the searing pain, the other scraping frantically against the dry earth.

His screams brought Benjo and the other men running to the pitch-truck. Sam was standing over Eddie, dazed by what he had done, the blackened rod hanging forgotten in his hand. He let

The Road Burners

himself be led away to the pub, where Benjo bought him a brandy. It was not the reaction he had expected from the older man but he was grateful for it. He felt sick and unhappy and as angry with himself as he had been with Eddie. The barman showed him into a back room, where he lay on a hard low couch alternately shivering and sweating, waiting for Eddie to come in and kill him. Then, a long time later, he heard an ambulance arrive and depart and some time after that Benjo came to fetch him. It was almost dark outside and much colder and it was an effort not to shiver.

Once they were inside the caravan, Benjo told him that the police had been out to ask what happened, but they were satisfied that Sam had been protecting himself against a violent and drunken man. There would be no charges.

Benjo smiled tiredly at Sam.

"We'll be going home in the morning," he said.

Slowly, Sam asked about Eddie.

"He'll be all right," said the old man. "He's had it coming to him for long enough. I should have got rid of him myself years ago. It's a load off my mind."

He got up, patted the boy on the back and started preparing some supper.

Sam could only sit, staring into the warm shadows cast by the oil lamp Benjo lit, thinking about Eddie. Not only was his heart scarred now, but his face as well. And all because of a woman. It made him sick. And suddenly he knew that Eddie really had been right. He never wanted to touch another girl.

At All Costs

BY IAN CRITCHETT

At all costs in the timeless night
Summon the precise things ; fill your emptiness
With all things firm and measured,
Known and accepted and accountable.
Seize the exact, the treasured and the known
And hug your heart upon the twisted pillow,
There before your hunted sleep began,
And close your hands upon its certainty.

The moon is striding wild across the pane,
The cold wild moon is out upon the night ;
Mathematics and desire contend
Again, again upon this moonlit bed ;
And nothing that a nursery hand can grasp
Stays the exultant sailing of that moon.
None can touch that pitiless monument
Though he gather moonbeams on the marble floor.

Waked up, a child, by the resulting day,
How seem the fears and glories of the night ?
Washed by the absolving light, how limitless
Expand the reflections of that memory.
At all costs in the time-called day
Hold to things known. Only by knowing
One certain thing can you escape the dust
And breast like Pegasus your destiny.

Elegy

BY MAY SARTON

Fiery, the tender child,
From the beginning burned,
And that beginning hard,
She raced like a young colt,
Spirit no man could tame,
And yet so warm and wild
All nature toward her turned,
Came to her hand and word . . .
Extravagance, revolt :
The signature was flame.

Consumed and self-consuming
Life sparkled in her hand
And shot out stars of fire
That vanished in the air
And showered once again,
A sparkler ever-blooming.
How could she understand
Her never-spent desire ?
They called her *Douce-amère* :
The signature was pain.

Such spirits always shed
And lose and shed once more
Their strange and starry brightness
In phosphorescent glory,
Not blest themselves, must bless.
She sheltered, nursed and fed
Many a wound and sore

Elegy

With an angelic lightness,
Yet in her tragic story
The signature was loss.

What we loved then, we hallow,
The great famished heart,
The flame at last at rest
That never hurt or harmed
But only ran to give,
And only burned to show
Where abnegations start,
How difficult at best
A life so wild and charmed :
The signature was love.

Here the Silence

BY ELIZABETH JOHNSON

Here the laughter is,
and the silence in between,
and the watching
for the sail's crisped canvas,
and the skip of rope on water,
and the blur of words across
from pier to hawser.
The ship creeps in
like an old cat to its place in the sun.

Here the waiting for those who
may be maimed—or dead,
and the wounds rubbed with salt ;
the timefilled eye, the trembling mouth,
or a throat flooded with joy.

Here the laughter is, and the silence in between,
and the watching,
as the sails glide wearily aloft,
and the ropes taut in,
and blurs of sound teeter from pier to hawser.
The ship sneaks out warily
down the avenue of sprinting foam ;
a little ship blown far
where the silence is, the ache dissolved.

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Autobiography 1939-1945

FREYA STARK, C.B.E.

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